



The Forward

General Convention 2009

Letter from the Bishop

Discernment. This is always an operative concept in the Church as we seek together to discern (discover, come to a sense of 'knowing') God's will for us. There are various levels of discernment and matters to discern. God does not always grant instant clarity even for a body of believers. Fasting and prayer and complete submission of our lives to the Lordship of Christ help to give us clearer discernment. Most of the time, the process of discernment is messy. Some of you have sought discernment about ministry or your life's vocation or an issue in your family. Sometimes we have an instant sense of God's direction and other times we enter a long process and God's direction is revealed to us one piece at a time—all in God's time.

The Episcopal Church is engaged in serious discernment about matters of human sexuality. The traditional and historic teaching of the Church on matters of sexuality is clear. The Church is at a time and place, though, where we are called to consider, in the light, our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters. I use the phrase 'in the light' because, as a Church, we are refusing to deal with these matters by keeping them in the dark or asking people to keep their sexual orientation to themselves or by living in unhealthy denial.

The General Convention made this clear in its resolution D025 which reaffirms our desire to remain in relationship with the wider communion while, at the same time, being clear about our particular context. I believe that D025 does accurately reflect the status of the church.

The most inaccurate press has been given to C056 which is the resolution regarding authorization of rites for same sex blessings. This resolution does not in any way authorize blessings of same sex unions. It does ask that the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Church Mu-

sic study the matter and make a report to the next convention.

All of this opens the Church up to attack and ridicule and misunderstanding. This is the cost of facing important matters of theology in the open with laity and clergy participating and not just bishops. This is the kind of Church that I have been called to serve—one that is Christ-centered and transparent in its discernment efforts. As a diocese, it is important that we continue the conversations about human sexuality in ways that are constructive.



The convention considered other important matters of mission and evangelism which, of course, gathered little in the way of media coverage. We adopted a denominational health care plan which will help dioceses like ours contain and reduce health care costs, we have a renewed sense of policy about pension plans

for lay professionals, and we adopted a new set of disciplinary canons which are oriented toward reconciliation and greater accountability for clergy in the Church.

The budget of The Episcopal Church was reduced by millions of dollars which means we will have to be creative and do more with less. I think we all are learning a bit about what that means in these times. Even in the midst of budget cuts, we made commitments to planting new churches and engaging in mission both foreign and domestic.

In spite of all that you might read about in the press or on the blogs, The Episcopal Church is continuing to witness to the transformational power of Jesus Christ. In our diocese, we will continue to consider new strategies for mission and engage the task of transformational ministry and evangelism with renewed vigor. The harvest is plentiful, and the laborers few. We have no time to be distracted.

Blessings,

+Sean

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Letter from the Presiding Bishop

My brothers and sisters in Christ:

The 76th General Convention is now history, though it will likely take some time before we are all reasonably clear about what the results are.

We gathered in Anaheim, as guests of the Diocese of Los Angeles, for eleven full days of worship, learning, and policy-making. The worship was stunning visually, musically, and liturgically, with provocative preaching and lively singing.

Our learning included training in Public Narrative, as well as news about the emergent church, in the LA Night presentation.

We welcomed a number of visitors from other parts of the Anglican Communion, including 15 of the primates (archbishops or presiding bishops), other bishops, clergy, and laity.

You can see and hear all this and more at the Media Hub: <http://gchub.episcopalchurch.org/>

The budget adopted represents a significant curtailment of church-wide ministry efforts, in recognition of the economic realities of many dioceses and church endowments, which will result in the loss of a number of Church Center staff who have given long and laudable service. Yet we will continue to serve God's mission, throughout The Episcopal Church and beyond. This budget expects that more mission work will continue or begin to take place at diocesan or congregational levels. Religious pilgrims, from the Israelites in the desert to Episcopalians in Alaska or Haiti, have always learned that times of leanness are opportunities for strengthened faith and creativity.



As a Church, we have deepened our commitments to mission and ministry with "the least of these" (Matthew 25). We included a budgetary commitment of 0.7% to the Millennium Development Goals, through the NetsforLife® program partnership of Episcopal Relief & Development. That is in addition to approximately 15% of the budget already committed to international development work.

We have committed to a domestic poverty initiative, meant to explore coherent and constructive responses to some of the worst poverty statistics in the Americas: Native American reservations and indigenous communities.

Justice is the goal, as we revised our canons (church rules) having to do with clergy discipline, both as an act of solidarity with those who may suffer at the hands of clergy and an act of pastoral concern for clergy charged with misconduct.

The General Convention adopted a health plan to serve all clergy and lay employees, which is expected to be a cost-savings across the whole of the United States portion of the Church. Work continues to ensure adequate health coverage in the non-U.S. parts of this Church. The Convention also mandated pension coverage for lay employees.

Liturgical additions were also included in the Convention's work, from more saints on the calendar to prayers around reproductive loss.

What captured the headlines across the secular media, however, had to do with two resolutions, the consequences of which were often misinterpreted or exaggerated. One, identified as D025, is titled "Anglican Communion: Commitment and Witness to Anglican Communion." It

- reaffirms our commitment to and desire to pursue mission with the Anglican Communion;
- reiterates our commitment to Listening Process urged by Lambeth Conferences of 1978, 1988, and 1998;

Letter from the Presiding Bishop cont.

- notes that our own participation in the listening process led General Convention in 2000 to “recognize that the baptized membership of The Episcopal Church includes same-sex couples living in lifelong committed relationships ‘characterized by fidelity, monogamy, mutual affection and respect, careful, honest communication, and the holy love which enables those in such relationships to see in each other the image of God’”;
- recognizes that ministry, both lay and ordained is being exercised by such persons in response to God’s call;
- notes that the call to ordained ministry is God’s call, is a mystery, and that the Church participates in that mystery through the process of discernment;
- acknowledges that the members of The Episcopal Church, and of the Anglican Communion, are not of one mind, and that faithful Christians disagree about some of these matters.



The other resolution that received a lot of press is C056, titled “Liturgies for Blessings.” The text adopted was a substitute for the original, yet the title remains unchanged. It

- acknowledges changing circumstances in the U.S. and elsewhere, in that civil jurisdictions in some places permit marriage, civil unions, and/or domestic partnerships involving same-sex couples, that call for a pastoral response from this Church;
- asks the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music, and the House of Bishops, to collect and develop theological and liturgical resources for such pastoral response, and report to the next General Convention;
- asks those bodies to invite comment and participation from other parts of this Church and the Anglican Communion;

- notes that bishops may provide generous pastoral responses to the needs of members of this Church; asks the Convention to honor the theological diversity of this Church in regard to matters of human sexuality.

The full text of both resolutions is available here: <http://gc2009.org/ViewLegislation/>

I urge you to read them for yourself. Some have insisted that these resolutions repudiate our relationships with other members of the Anglican Communion. My sense is that we have been very clear that we value our relationships within and around the Communion, and seek to deepen them. My sense as well is that we cannot do that without being honest about who and where we are. We are obviously not of one mind, and likely will not be until Jesus returns in all his glory. We are called by God to continue to wrestle with the circumstances in which we live and move and have our being, and to do it as carefully and faithfully as we are able, in companionship with those who disagree vehemently and agree wholeheartedly. It is only in that wrestling that we, like Jacob, will begin to discern the leading of the Spirit and the blessing of relationship with God.

Above all else, this Convention claimed God’s mission as the heartbeat of The Episcopal Church. I encourage every member of this Church to enter into conversation in your own congregation or diocese about God’s mission, and where you and your faith community are being invited to enter more deeply into caring for your neighbors, the “least of these” whom Jesus befriends.

***The Most Rev. Katharine Jefferts Schori
Presiding Bishop and Primate
The Episcopal Church***

Letter from the Archbishop of Canterbury

1

1. No-one could be in any doubt about the eagerness of the Bishops and Deputies of the Episcopal Church at the General Convention to affirm their concern about the wider Anglican Communion. Their generous welcome to guests from elsewhere, including myself, the manifest engagement with the crushing problems of the developing world and even the wording of one of the more controversial resolutions all make plain the fact that the Episcopal Church does not wish to cut its moorings from other parts of the Anglican family. There has been an insistence at the highest level that the two most strongly debated resolutions (DO25 and CO56) do not have the automatic effect of overturning the requested moratoria, if the wording is studied carefully. There is a clear commitment to seek counsel from elsewhere in the Communion about certain issues and an eloquent resolution in support of the 'Covenant for a Communion in Mission' as commended by ACC13. All of this merits grateful acknowledgement. The relationship between the Episcopal Church and the wider Communion is a reality which needs continued engagement and encouragement.

2. However, a realistic assessment of what Convention has resolved does not suggest that it will repair the broken bridges into the life of other Anglican provinces; very serious anxieties have already been expressed. The repeated request for moratoria on the election of partnered gay clergy as bishops and on liturgical recognition of same-sex partnerships has clearly not found universal favour, although a significant minority of bishops has just as clearly expressed its intention to remain with the consensus of the Communion. The statement that the Resolutions are essentially 'descriptive' is helpful, but unlikely to allay anxieties.

3. There are two points which I believe need to be reiterated and thought through further, and it seems to fall to the Archbishop of Canterbury to try and articulate them. To some extent they echo part of what I wrote after the last General Convention, as well as things said at the Lambeth Conference and the ACC, but they still have some pertinence.

2

4. The first is to do with the arguments most often used against the moratoria relating to same-sex unions. Appeal is made to the fundamental human rights dimension of attitudes to LGBT people, and to the impossibility of betraying their proper expectations of a Christian body which has courageously supported them.

5. In response, it needs to be made absolutely clear that, on the basis of repeated statements at the highest levels of the Communion's life, no Anglican has any business reinforcing prejudice against LGBT people, questioning their human dignity and civil liberties or their place within the Body of Christ. Our overall record as a Communion has not been consistent in this respect and this needs to be acknowledged with penitence.

6. However, the issue is not simply about civil liberties or human dignity or even about pastoral sensitivity to the freedom of individual Christians to form their consciences on this matter. It is about whether the Church is free to recognise same-sex unions by means of public blessings that are seen as being, at the very least, analogous to Christian marriage.

7. In the light of the way in which the Church has consistently read the Bible for the last two thousand years, it is clear that a positive answer to this question would have to be based on the most painstaking biblical exegesis and on a wide acceptance of the results within the Communion, with due account taken of the teachings of ecumenical partners also. A major change naturally needs a strong level of consensus and solid theological grounding.

8. This is not our situation in the Communion. Thus a blessing for a same-sex union cannot have the authority of the Church Catholic, or even of the Communion as a whole. And if this is the case, a person living in such a union is in the same case as a heterosexual person living in a sexual relationship outside the marriage bond; whatever the human respect and pastoral sensitivity such persons must be given, their chosen lifestyle is not one that the Church's teaching sanctions, and thus it is hard to see how they can act in the necessarily representative role that the ordained ministry, especially the episcopate, requires.

9. In other words, the question is not a simple one of human rights or human dignity. It is that a certain choice of lifestyle has certain consequences. So long as the Church Catholic, or even the Communion as a whole does not bless same-sex unions, a person living in such a union cannot without serious incongruity have a representative function in a Church whose public teaching is at odds with their lifestyle. (There is also an unavoidable difficulty over whether someone belonging to a local church in which practice has been changed in respect of same-sex unions is able to represent the Communion's voice and perspective in, for example, international ecumenical encounters.)

10. This is not a matter that can be wholly determined by what society at large considers usual or acceptable or determines to be legal. Prejudice and violence against LGBT people are sinful and disgraceful when society at large is intolerant.



Letter from the Archbishop of Canterbury cont.

erant of such people; if the Church has echoed the harshness of the law and of popular bigotry – as it so often has done – and justified itself by pointing to what society took for granted, it has been wrong to do so. But on the same basis, if society changes its attitudes, that change does not of itself count as a reason for the Church to change its discipline.

3

11. The second issue is the broader one of how a local church makes up its mind on a sensitive and controversial matter. It is of the greatest importance to remember this aspect of the matter, so as not to be completely trapped in the particularly bitter and unpleasant atmosphere of the debate over sexuality, in which unexamined prejudice is still so much in evidence and accusations of bad faith and bigotry are so readily thrown around.

12. When a local church seeks to respond to a new question, to the challenge of possible change in its practice or discipline in the light of new facts, new pressures, or new contexts, as local churches have repeatedly sought to do, it needs some way of including in its discernment the judgement of the wider Church. Without this, it risks becoming unrecognisable to other local churches, pressing ahead with changes that render it strange to Christian sisters and brothers across the globe.

13. This is not some piece of modern bureaucratic absolutism, but the conviction of the Church from its very early days. The doctrine that 'what affects the communion of all should be decided by all' is a venerable principle. On some issues, there emerges a recognition that a particular new development is not of such significance that a high level of global agreement is desirable; in the language used by the Doctrinal Commission of the Communion, there is a recognition that in 'intensity, substance and extent' it is not of fundamental importance. But such a recognition cannot be wished into being by one local church alone. It takes time and a willingness to believe that what we determine together is more likely, in a New Testament framework, to be in tune with the Holy Spirit than what any one community decides locally.

14. Sometimes in Christian history, of course, that wider discernment has been very fallible, as with the history of the Chinese missions in the seventeenth century. But this should not lead us to ignore or minimise the opposite danger of so responding to local pressure or change that a local church simply becomes isolated and imprisoned in its own cultural environment.

15. There have never been universal and straightforward rules about this, and no-one is seeking a risk-free, simple organ of doctrinal decision for our Communion. In an age of vastly improved communication, we must make the best use we can of the means available for consultation and try to build into our decision-making processes ways of checking whether a new local development would have the effect of isolating a local church or making it less recognisable to others. This again has an ecumenical dimension when a global Christian body is involved in partnerships and discussions with other churches who will quite reasonably want to know who now speaks for the body they are relating to when a controversial local change occurs. The results of our ecumenical discussions are themselves important elements in shaping the theological vision within which we seek to resolve our own difficulties.

16. In recent years, local pastoral needs have been cited as the grounds for changes in the sacramental practice of particular local churches within the Communion, and theological rationales have been locally developed to defend and promote such changes. Lay presidency at the Holy Communion is one well-known instance. Another is the regular admission of the unbaptised to Holy Communion as a matter of public policy. Neither of these practices has been given straightforward official sanction as yet by any Anglican authorities at diocesan or provincial level, but the innovative practices concerned have a high degree of public support in some localities.

17. Clearly there are significant arguments to be had about such matters on the shared and agreed basis of Scripture, Tradition and reason. But it should be clear that an acceptance of these sorts of innovation in sacramental practice would represent a manifest change in both the teaching and the discipline of the Anglican tradition, such that it would be a fair question as to whether the new practice was in any way continuous with the old. Hence the question of 'recognisability' once again arises.

18. To accept without challenge the priority of local and pastoral factors in the case either of sexuality or of sacramental practice would be to abandon the possibility of a global consensus among the Anglican churches such as would continue to make sense of the shape and content of most of our ecumenical activity. It would be to re-conceive the Anglican Communion as essentially a loose federation of local bodies with a cultural history in common, rather than a theologically coherent 'community of Christian communities'.

4

19. As Anglicans, our membership of the Communion is an important part of our identity. However, some see this as best expressed in a more federalist and pluralist way. They would see this as the only appropriate language for a modern or indeed postmodern global fellowship of believers in which levels of diversity are bound to be high and the risks of centralisation and authoritarianism are the most worrying. There is nothing foolish or incoherent about this approach. But it is not the approach that has generally shaped the self-understanding of our Communion – less than ever in the last half-century, with new organs and instruments for the Communion's communication and governance and new enterprises in ecumenical co-operation.

Letter from the Archbishop of Canterbury cont.

20. The Covenant proposals of recent years have been a serious attempt to do justice to that aspect of Anglican history that has resisted mere federation. They seek structures that will express the need for mutual recognisability, mutual consultation and some shared processes of decision-making. They are emphatically not about centralisation but about mutual responsibility. They look to the possibility of a freely chosen commitment to sharing discernment (and also to a mutual respect for the integrity of each province, which is the point of the current appeal for a moratorium on cross-provincial pastoral interventions). They remain the only proposals we are likely to see that address some of the risks and confusions already detailed, encouraging us to act and decide in ways that are not simply local.

21. They have been criticised as 'exclusive' in intent. But their aim is not to shut anyone out – rather, in words used last year at the Lambeth Conference, to intensify existing relationships.

22. It is possible that some will not choose this way of intensifying relationships, though I pray that it will be persuasive. It would be a mistake to act or speak now as if those decisions had already been made – and of course approval of the final Covenant text is still awaited. For those whose vision is not shaped by the desire to intensify relationships in this particular way, or whose vision of the Communion is different, there is no threat of being cast into outer darkness – existing relationships will not be destroyed that easily. But it means that there is at least the possibility of a twofold ecclesial reality in view in the middle distance: that is, a 'covenanted' Anglican global body, fully sharing certain aspects of a vision of how the Church should be and behave, able to take part as a body in ecumenical and interfaith dialogue; and, related to this body, but in less formal ways with fewer formal expectations, there may be associated local churches in various kinds of mutual partnership and solidarity with one another and with 'covenanted' provinces.

23. This has been called a 'two-tier' model, or, more disparagingly, a first- and second-class structure. But perhaps we are faced with the possibility rather of a 'two-track' model, two ways of witnessing to the Anglican heritage, one of which had decided that local autonomy had to be the prevailing value and so had in good faith declined a covenantal structure. If those who elect this model do not take official roles in the ecumenical interchanges and processes in which the 'covenanted' body participates, this is simply because within these processes there has to be clarity about who has the authority to speak for whom.

24. It helps to be clear about these possible futures, however much we think them less than ideal, and to speak about them not in apocalyptic terms of schism and excommunication but plainly as what they are – two styles of being Anglican, whose mutual relation will certainly need working out but which would not exclude co-operation in mission and service of the kind now shared in the Communion. It should not need to be said that a competitive hostility between the two would be one of the worst possible outcomes, and needs to be clearly repudiated. The ideal is that both 'tracks' should be able to pursue what they believe God is calling them to be as Church, with greater integrity and consistency. It is right to hope for and work for the best kinds of shared networks and institutions of common interest that could be maintained as between different visions of the Anglican heritage. And if the prospect of greater structural distance is unwelcome, we must look seriously at what might yet make it less likely.

25. It is my strong hope that all the provinces will respond favourably to the invitation to Covenant. But in the current context, the question is becoming more sharply defined of whether, if a province declines such an invitation, any elements within it will be free (granted the explicit provision that the Covenant does not purport to alter the Constitution or internal polity of any province) to adopt the Covenant as a sign of their wish to act in a certain level of mutuality with other parts of the Communion. It is important that there should be a clear answer to this question.

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26. All of this is to do with becoming the Church God wants us to be, for the better proclamation of the liberating gospel of Jesus Christ. It would be a great mistake to see the present situation as no more than an unhappy set of tensions within a global family struggling to find a coherence that not all its members actually want. Rather, it is an opportunity for clarity, renewal and deeper relation with one another – and so also with Our Lord and his Father, in the power of the Spirit. To recognise different futures for different groups must involve mutual respect for deeply held theological convictions. Thus far in Anglican history we have (remarkably) contained diverse convictions more or less within a unified structure. If the present structures that have safeguarded our unity turn out to need serious rethinking in the near future, this is not the end of the Anglican way and it may bring its own opportunities. Of course it is problematic; and no-one would say that new kinds of structural differentiation are desirable in their own right. But the different needs and priorities identified by different parts of our family, and in the long run the different emphases in what we want to say theologically about the Church itself, are bound to have consequences. We must hope that, in spite of the difficulties, this may yet be the beginning of a new era of mission and spiritual growth for all who value the Anglican name and heritage.

+ *Rowan Cantuar*

General Convention: Review of Some Resolutions by the Very Rev. John P. Downey

My comments will focus on the two major resolutions regarding sexuality matters and the resolutions coming out of the Ecumenical Relations Committee on which I served.

Resolution D025 “Anglican Communion: Commitment and Witness to the Anglican Communion” spoke of our commitment to full participation in the Anglican Communion and of the development of our understanding and practice in The Episcopal Church with regard to our members who are in same-sex partnerships and who exercise ministry at all levels of our church. It goes on to point out that the discernment and confirmation of any call to ordained ministry is carried out according to our Constitution and Canons. Finally, it recognizes that faithful Christians in the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion disagree about some of these matters.



D025 indicates a conviction, or at least a hope, that the full inclusion of gay and lesbian people in The Episcopal Church and the full inclusion of The Episcopal Church in the Anglican Communion need not be in conflict with each other. While there is no canonical “moratorium” on the ordination (as deacons, priests, or bishops) of people in same-sex partnerships, there is awareness that the discernment, through election and consent, of such persons must take our commitment to the Anglican Communion into account. Only the unfolding events of the future will show how this works out.

C056 took up the matter of blessings of same-sex unions. It recognized the rapidly changing social context of some of our States and the pastoral challenge that puts before the dioceses in those States. It called for a gathering of theological and liturgical resources with a report to the next General Convention, with a request that this process involve wide participation in our church and beyond. It further noted that, in the meantime, bishops may provide “generous pastoral responses” to such situations. And, like D025, the theological diversity of our church on such matters was acknowledged and honored.

What does C056 mean? While it (intentionally) stops short of authorizing liturgies of blessing, there will be no doubt be wide differences and even disagreements about exactly what “generous pastoral response” means in practice. Once again, only time will tell how this all works out.

My impression was that both resolutions attempted as best they could to find the broad middle ground of the Episcopal Church as represented among the Bishops and Deputies at Anaheim. Both were done with an earnest and sincere heart to be pastoral, transparent, theological, open to the wider church, and, mostly, in a word, honest. Being Episcopalian at this point in history requires patience, work, and living with the ambiguities of the “muddled middle” as we make our way through this. The gift and grace is that we are a community of faith that is trying our best to do this, however imperfectly.

As for the Ecumenical and Interfaith resolutions, we passed a Full Communion agreement with the Moravian Church, who will now take it up at their synods over the next few years. If passed, it holds promise to be enriching all around, even though Moravians are primarily concentrated in just a few areas of the United States. We affirmed our Interim Eucharistic Sharing with the United Methodists as we work toward Full Communion. We adopted an agreement with the Presbyterian Church USA which, while not anticipating Full Communion, shows how we can share ministry and mission where possible, given our differences. And we approved a dialogue with the Church of Sweden which should easily lead to Full Communion in the near future.

For me, though, the greatest delight of the entire General Convention was the work of our Ecumenical Relations Committee on an Interreligious Relations Statement. What we found was that a diverse group of Episcopalians – Liberal and Conservative, Evangelical and Catholic, found it quite easy to agree that we share a core faith, unashamedly grounded in scripture and historic orthodox Christian theology. And we were also unashamed to state this clearly and unambiguously as we envision being in dialogue with people of other religions. It gave me great hope to see that we remain united in a common Christian faith when we are free to take our eyes off the pressing concerns of the present

Reflections from the Deputies

The Rev. Adam Trambley

This year's General Convention in Anaheim was across the street from Disneyland. Whether in spite of the proximity to Mickey Mouse, or because of it, we handled some important issues. More importantly, the tone of the convention was loving, respectful and filled with a desire to move forward together. Some of the highlights included:

Health Care

General Convention made a huge step in managing increasing health care costs by making mandatory the Episcopal Medical Trust for all church employees receiving health insurance. Even though our diocese is already participating, the resulting larger risk pool is expected to reduce our costs. Churchwide, the savings are expected to be \$134 million over six years.

Pension

Convention also mandated pension benefits for lay people employed by the church for more than 1000 hours/year. This step regularizes what is already common practice in many parishes and provides retirement funds through the Church Pension Fund for those lay people who give up secular careers to work for our churches.

Ecumenical and Interfaith Relationships

What probably hasn't made many headlines is the major ecumenical and interfaith steps taken at this convention. The Episcopal Church has passed a full-communion agreement with the Moravian Church. Moravians are an early reformation church known for their passionate singing. If the Moravian Church passes this agreement next summer, we will be able to work much more closely with this church whose members helped develop John Wesley's passionate awakening and are concentrated in certain parts of the United States and Europe. The Convention also approved a document calling us and the Presbyterian Church USA into deeper efforts of common mission. While recognizing that we are a long way from full-communion and interchangeability of ministries, the document recognizes many areas that we could work more closely together. A basic document that can be used as a foundation for dialogue with non-Christian faiths was also approved. This piece summarizes our basic Christian beliefs in a generous, understandable way that will help parishes and dioceses begin discussions with local Muslims, Hindus, Native Americans or other people of different religions.

Anglican Communion and Same-Sex Questions

Pieces that have made the news are much more likely to revolve around perceived changes in policy concerning ordained persons in same sex relationships or the blessing of same sex unions. Two resolutions were passed on these matters by significant majorities. The first resolution strongly reaffirmed our commitment to the Anglican Communion while also recognizing that partnered gays and lesbians currently serve the Episcopal Church in every order of ministry. This resolution also noted that the call to ordained ministry is a mystery and that we will continue to follow our own Constitution and Canons in discerning that call for all people. Finally the resolution noted that the church is not of one mind and that people of good conscience disagree on these issues. The second resolution takes note of the variety of legislation being passed throughout the country around same-sex marriage and the questions this poses for the church. The resolution provided for the gathering of theological and liturgical resources around same-sex blessings for the next three years, while allowing for generous pastoral responses by bishops to those in their diocese.

Millennium Development Goals

Once again, the Episcopal Church signaled its strong support to the Millennium Development Goals by pledging 0.7% of our budget over the next three years to fight extreme poverty. Support for this important work was provided in many testimonies at budget hearings and by those gathered for a U2charist service, where funds were raised to support Episcopalians for Global Reconciliation and Episcopal Relief and Development. Dioceses, parishes and individuals are also encouraged to give 0.7% of our income to help end extreme poverty.

Budget

General Convention was also faced with many of the same budget concerns afflicting our parishes and dioceses, and they listened. Significant cuts were made in the Episcopal Church budget to reduce costs. In addition, the apportionment asked from Diocese will be reduced from 21% to 19% over the next three years and diocesan funds exempted from the asking was increased as a way to target assistance to smaller dioceses. These budget cuts should help the Episcopal Church become more streamlined, develop efficient electronic communications, and prepare us to better respond to our future. Our own Anne Bardol spent scores of hours with the Program, Budget, and Finance Committee to put together this budget, and we can be proud of her work.

Reflections from the Deputies cont.

Worship and Fellowship

Another key piece of General Convention is the opportunity to meet and renew friendships with people from throughout the country and throughout the world. Worshipping in styles and languages from across the church is a key part of convention, as are the conversations in hallways, over a meal, or in the exhibit hall. Finding out all the ways that God is at work throughout our church is inspiring, and after long days of sometimes dull legislation or recalcitrant voting machines, being with Episcopalians of various gifts, perspectives, and ministries always made me feel proud to be a part of this church. I know I am blessed to be an Episcopalian in the Diocese of Northwestern Pennsylvania.

Anne Bardol

Although Program, Budget, and Finance (PB&F) has been telling General Conventions through the years that "business as usual" cannot continue, this is the year it became very real through the budget passed by General Convention. As a member of PB&F, it was one of the most difficult for me because of the painful but necessary decisions that needed to be made concerning income, spending and how the Church does business. The hours were long but the work was rewarding; discussions were varied and the Eucharists were refreshing. There were 491 pieces of legislation produced with 361 or so dealt with and the remainder returned to committees for further perfecting. Each convention has a lesson to be taught and learned and this one was no exception. Also, because I'm usually "MIA" during convention because of PB&F, it was nice to have the opportunity to catch up with the rest of the deputation toward the end of convention at the diocese's dinner.

Sharon Davenport

I thoroughly enjoyed participating as a Deputy in this year's 76th General Convention of The Episcopal Church. The experience was both exhilarating and exhausting. So much activity in such a relatively short time! My work in Anaheim began on Tuesday, July 7, as a member of the Stewardship and Development Legislative Committee. We met early that morning and most every morning thereafter to discuss and process the resolutions assigned to us before sending them on to one of the Houses – Deputies or Bishops – to be taken up during the ten "legislative days" of Convention, July 8 thru 17. As Deputies, we spent close to 40 hours in legislative session during those ten days – coming to grips with resolutions on a great variety of topics, thoughtfully listening to one another in a collegial atmosphere – and finally, casting our votes. The daily Community Eucharists were lively and uplifting and there were additional worship opportunities, from Taize to a "U2charist," complete with a Bono look-alike. It was a mind-opening and awesome time. I am very grateful to have had the opportunity to serve as a Deputy to the 76th General Convention and I hope to share more with you in the future about what happened there.

Thank You to Our Deputies

I want to take this opportunity to thank the deputation from our diocese for their hard work and dedication. They served under the capable leadership of Fr. Denny Blauser who was the chair of the deputation, and I am grateful for his leadership.

I offer a special word of thanks to Anne Bardol who serves on the Program, Budget, and Finance Committee of the General Convention. This is one of the busiest and most important committees. She literally worked morning, noon, and night with her committee to see that the mission priorities of the Church were adequately funded. Our diocese has a front row seat to this process thanks to Anne.

Finally, I want to thank Mary Bowers and Vanessa Butler for their work on the staff of the General Convention. Vanessa wrote the official minutes of the House of Deputies, and Mary worked on the platform of the HoD preparing and filing resolutions. I could fund the diocesan budget if I had a dime for every person at the General Convention who thanked me for allowing them to serve.

+Sean



From L-R: Gary Yaeger, the Rev. Adam Trambley, Bishop Sean, the Very Rev. John Downey, Anne Bardol, the Rev. Brian Reid, Mary Bowers, Kaycee Reib, Sharon Davenport, and the Rev. Denny Blauser

