

**REPORT OF THE DIOCESE OF NEW JERSEY GENERAL CONVENTION DEPUTATION TO THE  
235TH DIOCESAN CONVENTION OF THE DIOCESE OF NEW JERSEY**

**The General Convention**

The General Convention of The Episcopal Church — the highest legislative body of the denomination — meets every three years to do the business of the church. It meets as two Houses: The House of Bishops, consisting of all active and retired bishops, and the House of Deputies, consisting of priests, deacons, and lay people elected by their dioceses. Every diocese can elect four lay and four clergy deputies and up to four lay and four clergy alternate deputies. Each House sits and deliberates and votes separately, although there can be joint sessions for informational purposes. Voting is by passing or rejecting Resolutions, which can state church policy, amend the Constitution or Canons of the church, or direct actions to be taken. Resolutions are only effective if passed in the exact same language by each House prior to the adjournment of the Convention. Because of the volume of proposed Resolutions to be considered, much of the work of each House is done by Legislative Committees on specific subjects, whose reports on Resolutions are submitted to their House for action.

**The 79th General Convention - 2018**

This year, the General Convention met from July 5 through July 13 in Austin, Texas. Those attending from the Diocese of New Jersey were:

- The Right Reverend William H. Stokes, Bishop of New Jersey
- Ms. Susan Stokes, Episcopal Church Women
- The Reverend Jack Zamboni, First Clergy Deputy
- The Reverend Gail Bennett, Deacon, Second Clergy Deputy
- The Reverend Valerie L. Balling, Third Clergy Deputy
- The Reverend D. Scott Russell, Fourth Clergy Deputy
- The Reverend W. Keith McCoy, First Clergy Alternate
- The Reverend Justin A. Falciani, Second Clergy Alternate
- Canon Paul Ambos, Esq., First Lay Deputy
- Canon Noreen Duncan, Second Lay Deputy
- Captain Louis Cavaliere, Third Lay Deputy
- Ms. Wendy Blackman, Fourth Lay Deputy
- Ms. Barbara Okamoto Bach, First Lay Alternate and Legislative Aide to Committee 9
- Mr. Thomas Szczerba, Second Lay Alternate
- Mr. Marcus A Gales, Third Lay Alternate
- Ms. Carolyn Belvin, Province II Representative, Episcopal Church Women
- Ms. Joanne Hutchinson, Episcopal Church Women
- Ms. Carol Council, Episcopal Church Women
- Ms. Donna Freidel, Esq., Episcopal Church Women
- The Reverend Ricardo Sheppard, Youth Presence Advisor
- Ms. Joanna Tineo, Youth Presence Advisor
- Mr. Jon Carl Lewis, Youth Presence Advisor
- Ms. Tonya Wildgoose, Youth Presence Advisor
- Mr. Hendrickson Tineo, Young Adult
- Ms. Ashley Agard, Young Adult
- Mr. Morgan Razo, Youth Presence

Ms. Janaé Belle, Youth Presence  
Ms. Sharisma Ubiera, Youth Presence  
Mr. Aaron Wildgoose, Youth Presence  
Mr. Manuel Tejada, Youth Presence  
Mr. Michael Miller, Youth Presence  
Ms. Catherine Ambos, Volunteer and Legislative Aide to Committee 9  
Ms. Allison Burns-LaGrecca, Volunteer at Episcopal General Seminary Floor Exhibit

This last summer's Convention acted on a record number of Resolutions. Notable accomplishments were the adoption of a \$134 million budget for the next three years, the opening up of celebrating same-sex unions in their parishes even if their bishop objects, adoption of a plan for developing a revised Book of Common Prayer, policy statements on gender justice, immigration issues, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Numerous constitutional amendments were passed on a first reading, and many canons were amended as well. All of the final General Convention Resolutions can be found here: <https://www.vbinder.net/resolutions?house=hd&lang=en>.

### **Resolution - A295 Adopt the Budget for The Episcopal Church**

The \$133.8 million 2019-2021 budget reflects Presiding Bishop Michael Curry's priorities of evangelism, racial reconciliation and justice, and creation care, which he refers to as the "three pillars" of the Episcopal branch of the Jesus Movement. Diocesan funding is set at a flat rate of 15% of total diocesan income for each of the three years 2019, 2020, and 2021 (after a \$140,000 exemption). Diocesan income is measured by reported income from congregations and investment income for the previous two years' reports. Resolution B014 provided for the first time for compensation for the President of the House of Deputies, although no compensation amount was set.

### **Resolution A068 - Plan for the Revision of the Book of Common Prayer**

This resolution called for continuing work to update and expand upon the 1979 Prayer Book, authorizing the appointment of a diverse Task Force on Liturgical and Prayer Book Revision. It will consult with bishops and worshipping communities, including liturgical commissions in each diocese, to develop new liturgies, with translations to be available in Spanish, French, and Haitian Creole as well as English, as the process continues. While the Task Force is to report to the 2021 Convention, no timeline for completion of their work was set.

### **Resolution D078 - Authorize Holy Eucharist, Rite II (Expansive Language) for Trial Use**

This resolution authorized, pending the completion of the next revision of the Book of Common Prayer, the use of optional expansive-language versions of Eucharistic Prayers A, B, and D for trial use. It provided for electronic distribution at no cost and for translations into Spanish, French, and Haitian Creole.

### **Resolution - B012 Marriage Rites for the Whole Church**

This resolution authorizes the continued trial use of the liturgies "The Witnessing and Blessing of a Marriage" and "The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage 2" and for trial use starting in Advent 2018 the liturgies "The Blessing of a Civil Marriage 2" and "An Order for Marriage 2". All such uses shall continue until completion of the next Prayer Book revision. These liturgies are to be translated into Spanish, French, and Haitian Creole and made available in electronic form at no cost. Where permitted by civil law, these may be celebrated in the participants' local

congregations, even where the bishop of that diocese might object; such bishops are required to designate another bishop to provide pastoral support for couples, clergy and congregations.

### **Resolution - A238 Admit Episcopal Diocese of Cuba as a Diocese of The Episcopal Church**

The Episcopal Church had evangelized Cuba at the turn of the 20th Century, and it had been a Mission Diocese up until 1966. In that year, in the aftermath of the Cuban Revolution, the House of Bishops withdrew its status and made it into an Extra-Provincial Diocese of the Anglican Communion. Starting in 2003, the Diocese of Cuba had initiated a request to rejoin The Episcopal Church. The 2015 General Convention passed a Resolution to form a Task Force to deal with the request, but its proposal to the 2018 Convention (A052) essentially requested further study. The Legislative Committee on Cuba after holding hearings proposed a new Resolution (A238) that would admit Cuba as a Diocese, effective upon completion of such things as an amendment of their diocesan constitution and canons to conform to the requirements of The Episcopal Church. This resolution passed in both Houses unanimously, and Cuba is expected to be certified to rejoin The Episcopal Church sometime in 2019.

### **Gender Justice**

Following a July 3 special listening liturgy to acknowledge the #MeToo movement and to hear more than 40 personal testaments by women telling of abuse, harassment and exploitation in The Episcopal Church, the House of Bishops adopted "A Working Covenant for the Practice of Equity and Justice for All in The Episcopal Church." This agreement calls for bishops as "pastoral and prophetic leaders of the church" to take steps to examine their positions of power and privilege and to reform church practices in their dioceses in order to "Create a culture of empowerment, giving space for leadership based on equity, not tokenism" and to eliminate gender-based and cultural barriers to leadership. The House of Deputies adopted Resolution D087 to amend its Rules of Order to provide for allowing nursing infants onto the floor of Convention and to provide safe spaces to allow nursing during sessions.

### **Immigration Issues**

Resolution C033 put the church on record as respecting the dignity of immigrants and outlines how public policy should reflect that belief; A178 took a forceful stand against family separations and treatment of immigrant parents and children; and C009, titled "Becoming a Sanctuary Church," encouraged Episcopalians and congregations to reach out to and support immigrants facing deportation, including by providing physical sanctuary if they choose. On July 8, Presiding Bishop Curry led a "prayer vigil" on the grounds of the T. Don Hutto Residential Center, an immigrant detention facility housing women, many of whom had been separated from their families awaiting a deportation decision. More than a thousand Convention attendees on 19 buses took a half-hour ride to the detention center and prayed and sang within sight and hearing of the women watching from the facility's windows.

### **The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict**

Fifteen resolutions were submitted on Israel-Palestine issues going into General Convention, but because of the controversial nature of the proposals only six ended up passing both houses. Those passed touched on the plight of Palestinian children, the status of Jerusalem, the disproportionate use of lethal force on both sides, and ways the Episcopal Church can press for peace through its investment decisions, not by total divestment from companies doing business in

Israel but through a "human rights investment screen" that allows for a shareholder voice in corporate decisions.

### **Texas in July**

Every morning, the Bishops Against Gun Violence met to pray and to distribute small wooden crosses on orange necklaces — 92 each day to memorialize the 92 daily American shooting-death victims. At the beginning of the Convention these were a rarity, but by the end of the Convention they were ubiquitous. On Sunday, the Bishops group held a public meeting in Brush Square Park across from the Convention Center featuring the family of Carmen Schentrup, one of the victims of the shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida.

Beyond public prayers and protests, Convention attendees were mostly free to socialize for meals and enjoy the cuisine of downtown Austin, in a welcome break from the intense pressure of committee work and the legislative sessions. While the heat was oppressive, it was not that much worse than New Jersey in August. One evening, members of the New Jersey Deputation joined the thousands of tourists lining the sidewalk on the Congress Street Bridge at dusk to see the bats. One of the largest bat colonies in the country lives under the bridge, and at sunset they swarm out from the bridge to help clear Austin of mosquitoes. We could use such colonies in New Jersey.

Throughout the Convention, volunteers from the Diocese of Texas in their distinctive orange "And also with y'all" t-shirts helped direct traffic within the Convention Center and the committee venues, acted as couriers, and generally helped make everything happen. The next General Convention is set to take place in Baltimore in the summer of 2021. Perhaps Episcopalians from the Diocese of New Jersey could volunteer there.

The City of Austin has adopted the motto: "Keep Austin Weird". For many weird Episcopalians, it was a great place to spend two busy weeks this summer.

Respectfully submitted,

Canon Paul Ambos, Esq., First Lay Deputy & Chair  
Canon Noreen Duncan, Second Lay Deputy  
Captain Louis Cavaliere, Third Lay Deputy  
Ms. Wendy Blackman, Fourth Lay Deputy  
Ms. Barbara Okamoto Bach, First Lay Alternate and  
Legislative Aide to Committee 9  
Mr. Thomas Szczerba, Second Lay Alternate  
Mr. Marcus A Gales, Third Lay Alternate  
The Reverend Jack Zamboni, First Clergy Deputy, Conven-  
tion Coordinator & Vice Chair  
The Reverend Gail Bennett, Deacon, Second Clergy Deputy  
The Reverend Valerie L. Balling, Third Clergy Deputy &  
Secretary  
The Reverend D. Scott Russell, Fourth Clergy Deputy  
The Reverend W. Keith McCoy, First Clergy Alternate  
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