

Deputies' Report

The 75th General Convention

Introduction to General Convention: The General Convention is the largest bicameral legislative body in the world. Its processes are similar to those of the U.S. Congress. Like Congress, General Convention has two houses; the House of Bishops is made up of current and retired bishops, while the House of Deputies had more than 800 clerical and lay deputies from 111 dioceses at this convention. Eleven of those dioceses are in other countries.

General Convention business comes through resolutions submitted by the various committees and commissions which work between Conventions, or from deputies, bishops, dioceses and provinces. Each resolution is assigned to a committee, which holds a hearing where any registered members of Convention, including visitors, may testify. After the hearing, the language of the resolution is perfected and it is then submitted to the first house for debate. For a resolution to be accepted, it must pass both houses with the exact same wording.

Unlike Congress, everything that General Convention does is done in the context of prayer and worship. The Eucharist is celebrated every morning; the day's lessons are discussed in small table groups. Both houses stop for noonday prayers and a meditation, led by a chaplain. Before every major decision, the chaplain leads the House in prayer and a period of silence. Prayer is often offered before the announcement of a vote.

General Convention 2006: According to this year's ECR deputies,* what is seen in newspapers or on the web about General Convention is only the tip of the iceberg. The primary work of Convention is to set priorities for mission and ministry for the Episcopal Church, raising issues requiring in-depth study by one of the commissions or committees that work between Conventions.

Examples of 2006 resolutions will have a direct effect on El Camino Real:

- Support of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals - 8 declarations directed at the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger by 2015; every individual, congregation and diocese will be asked to give 0.7% of their income to the Millennium Development Goals by July 7, 2007. This will affect ECR's budgeting for next year, as well as budgeting in our congregations.
- All decision-making bodies in the church, including vestries, will be encouraged to have equal representation of men and women.
- The Revised Common Lectionary (RCL) will replace the BCP lectionary by Advent I in 2007. However, there is provision for use of the BCP lectionary, with the permission of the bishop, until Advent I, 2010.
- Interim Eucharistic sharing with The United Methodist Church will now allow joint celebrations between the two churches.
- Campus ministries will now be authorized to form mission congregations.

(Complete text of all GC resolutions can be found at: <http://gc2006.org/legislation>)

Other items of particular interest to El Camino Real:

- St. Timothy's, Mountain View and the Rev. Kevin Phillips received awards for best practices in stewardship from The Episcopal Network for Stewardship
- Barbara Creed, St Francis, San Jose, was again elected as a Trustee of the Church Pension Fund.
- Resolutions submitted by ECR for additions to the Church Calendar (Joan of Arc and the Confession of Martha) were referred to a Standing Committee for consideration. They may now be used locally.

Major issues at this General Convention: Deputies report that throughout this Convention there was a sense that this convention was different. An unusual number of visitors from other provinces of the Anglican Communion were present to observe our methods of decision-making. Bishops and deputies were keenly aware that the bishop elected as the next Presiding Bishop would represent the Episcopal Church in the Anglican Communion – and were also aware that they were being asked to make decisions that might result in our church's exclusion from that Communion.

The election of Katharine Jefferts Schori: This General Convention made history by electing the first woman nominated for the position of Presiding Bishop, and did so only 30 years after it had first approved the ordination of women to the priesthood.

Responses to the Windsor Report: The Windsor Report was written by a committee of the Anglican Communion, in part due to the actions of General Convention 2003 which had consented to the consecration of a gay man in a partnered relationship as the Bishop of New Hampshire. The Windsor Report asked for a moratorium on further consecrations of gay bishops, as well as a moratorium on the development and use of rites of blessings for same-gendered couples until such time as the wider Anglican Communion can come to a consensus on the issues. At General Convention, multiple hearings were held on the Windsor Report resolutions. The largest hearing had over 1000 in attendance and heard over 70 speakers. The resolutions gradually came to the floor of the House of Deputies. Deputies voted

- to commit to interdependence within the Anglican Communion (A159)
- to express regret for straining the bonds of affection by the actions of GC 2003 and to ask for forgiveness as we seek to live into deeper levels of communion (A160)
- to affirm appropriate pastoral care for all (A163)
- to commit the church to the "listening process" as recommended by the Windsor Report (A165)
- to support the development of an Anglican Covenant (A166).

However, the most controversial Windsor resolution was still before the deputies. On both June 19 and 20, a resolution was debated that urged "nominating committees, electing conventions, standing committees, and bishops with jurisdiction to refrain from the nomination, election and consenting to consecration of bishops whose manner of life presents a challenge to the wider church and will lead to further strains on communion" and "not to proceed to develop or authorize Rites of Blessing of same sex unions." That same resolution affirmed pastoral care for gay and lesbian Episcopalians and apologized to them for these decisions. The resolution was soundly defeated, and therefore was not sent to the House of Bishops. Convention had failed to agree to the two moratoriums requested by the Windsor Report. However, on June 21, the last legislative day of Convention, Presiding Bishop Frank

Griswold called for an extraordinary joint meeting of both houses. Griswold said that Convention needed to send a stronger message to the Anglican Communion or the Presiding Bishop-elect might not be welcome at the table, and our Anglican Consultative Council representatives might not be able to return to their seats. After verbally presenting a resolution on the Election of Bishops, the Presiding Bishop asked the bishops to return to their own house to debate the resolution.

With the clock running out, deputies conducted rapid-fire voting on many other urgent matters with little debate. At the end of the morning, deputies received the resolution that had passed in the House of Bishops (B033) which, in part, calls “upon Standing Committees and Bishops with jurisdiction to exercise restraint by not consenting to the consecration of any candidate to the episcopate whose manner of life presents a challenge to the wider church and will lead to further strains on communion.” The debate that followed in the House of Deputies was passionate on both sides of the issue. During the debate, the Presiding Bishop-elect received permission to address the House of Deputies. Saying that the Episcopal Church was currently one body with two minds, she compared us to conjoined twins and said that doctors considered it to be unethical to separate such twins unless both had a chance of survival. She pledged her full commitment to the inclusion of gay and lesbian Christians in this church, saying that her support of this resolution “does not slam the door on further discussion, but I think it is the best we are going to manage at this point in our church’s history.”

Deputy Dottie Fuller writes: Both the current and future Presiding Bishops came before us urging a positive vote on Resolution B033 supporting a concept that deputies had strongly rejected the previous day. We were being asked to choose between two positives: a “yes” vote could possibly keep us in the Anglican Communion, but a “no” vote would support the continued full inclusion of gay and lesbian members in our church. Most of us knew that there were no right answers. There was no assurance that voting “yes” would be enough to guarantee that our Presiding Bishop would be invited to the next gathering of the Anglican Communion. Voting “no” would support full inclusion, but would also put the weight of our “walking apart” on the shoulders on our gay and lesbian members. An electronic vote by orders was called for. The results were announced: the resolution had passed. General Convention had agreed, to a degree, to one of the two Windsor moratoriums. There was no rejoicing, no smiling faces; many were in tears, and the convention center was full of small sober groups trying to figure out what we had done. I have very little memory of the afternoon session of that our final day. We rushed through some urgent resolutions, said our final prayers and the gavel came down on General Convention. Many of us felt that we had left more questions unanswered than we had answered; important resolutions that had come out of three years of committee deliberations, never reached the floor. Most of our time had been spent developing our response to the Windsor Report, but we were still left with the question, “Have we done enough?” Looking back over the whole convention, I know that we had done good work. I hold on to the fact that we set as our number one priority the promotion of justice and peace for all God’s creation, and gave the church concrete direction to work toward that reality by supporting the Millennium Development Goals. This brings our church back to what we can agree on and perhaps in the future we will use less energy on what we can’t agree on. We took a leap of faith and elected as our new Presiding Bishop, a woman who is a scientist and who is known for her ability to bring people together. We did our best to listen to the Holy Spirit and what we were being called to do as a church. I also hold on to the Gospel message that Jesus calms the storm and brings us peace. The next three years will, of course, be interesting!

Deputy Gordon Gritter writes: The initial spirit of this Convention seemed apprehensive. Everyone knew that there would be conflict over major issues arising out of actions of General Convention 2003 and theological/ecclesiastical divisions within the Episcopal Church. Nevertheless, Convention proceeded well. An important early achievement was the strong approval of a proposal to participate in the Millennium Development Goals, an international and widely ecumenical drive to eradicate severe poverty and hunger in the world, provide universal education, promote gender equality, reduce child mortality, and combat malaria and other diseases. Convention dealt with various approaches to Windsor Report issues, defeated most of the proposed Resolutions, and finally passed Resolution B033, an emergency action by the House of Bishops which urged bishops and Standing Committees to be very circumspect about election and approval of bishops whose manner of life would be problematic in the Worldwide Anglican Communion. The ECR Deputation joined in the great jubilation which erupted spontaneously in response to the election of Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori to be the next Presiding Bishop.

Deputy Donna Ross writes: To be part of the House of Deputies – and to vote on issues fundamental to the faith and future of the Church, on behalf of the Diocese of El Camino Real – was both an awesome responsibility and a great privilege. I came to this Convention under the impression that the Episcopal Church is divided almost 50/50 on the difficult issues before it; so I was surprised to see that – while there are at least two sides to every Convention issue, and while speakers for the minority positions are vocal and much reported in the news media – there was a broad, firm majority in almost every vote at Convention.

Deputy Wendy Smith writes: The decision to make the convention one day shorter was a mistake, in that the legislative process was much tighter, with no room for a big issue to take center stage, as it did. In the end, many important pieces of legislation died that we should have considered, and voted upon. I sensed that everyone worked hard in their respective responsibilities. Having attended the 2000 and 2003 Conventions, I wondered whether this group of deputies would support the votes taken at those Conventions, or attempt to step back from them. In the event, it was clear that the majority did support those votes, and at the same time, wanted very much to remain actively a part of the Anglican Communion. For me, an early indicator of this direction was the decision to approve the Revised Common Lectionary, which was voted down three years ago. Another indicator was the sense that deputies were tired of all the controversy and wanted to get on with the mission of the Church. The interest in the Millennium Development Goals, and in other resolutions which will move the witness of the church forward, was strong. I was aware going into the Convention that Bishop Jefferts Schori was one of the front runners for Presiding Bishop, but along with everyone else, I didn't think she was "electable". I was thrilled and astonished by her election, and had a strong sense of the Holy Spirit's guidance of the House of Bishops. I will never forget the moment when her name was announced, and all 3000 people in the room gasped together, and then cheered for 10 minutes at least. I am especially pleased because she was clearly elected based on skills and qualifications, not on gender.

Alternate Deputy Jim Wilson writes: It is clear that a solid majority of those meeting at General Convention found that the problems that cause parishes and dioceses to leave – or distance themselves – from The Episcopal Church are not problems; rather, they are evidence of the transforming love of Christ. We were faced with a choice: to conform to the discomfiture of the wider church, or press on with what we think is right. The outcome, as usual, happened in the in-between. We elected Katharine Jefferts Schori; the Communion still lives with no pronouncements of the final doom. That is the good

news. The bad news is that we passed a resolution, at the urging of our bishops, that calls for restraint in selecting bishops “whose pattern of life might cause concern in other parts of the Communion.” This is bad in that it is a slight retrenchment from our policy of full inclusion. The fate of the resolution was in doubt until our Presiding Bishop-elect asked for this tool to use when talking with the rest of the Communion. Bishop Jefferts Schori feels that it might be short-sighted not to talk to folks even if they disagree with us. The House of Deputies agreed and passed the resolution. One other reason to stay in touch as officially and constructively as we can with the Third World —most of whose church leaders disapprove of what we are doing – is that a statistical percentage of that world are gay and lesbian, has AIDS, or for a myriad of reasons needs our help. There is a real sense that the new Presiding Bishop will use this tool wisely and tell us quickly if it is not working. She starts work on November 1, 2006.

Several ECR Deputies served on Legislative Committees and contributed these reports:

Legislative Committee on Canons (Deputy Pat Waddell): In the case of the Committee on Canons, there were two drafting groups, one focused on Title IV, the other on Title III. The Title III group was really a “review group”, but the term drafting group was applied to them anyway. This small group met for many hours, working with the draft resolution and a number of comments received from a variety of sources. Additionally, testimony on the draft had been heard and would be considered. Work on the revision of Title IV continued up to three days before the end of the Convention, when it became clear that it was unlikely the work would be completed in time. The drafting group then set about writing a substitute resolution to refer the ongoing work to a new, temporary interim body. That substitute passed and we will expect a new draft in 2009.

Legislative Committee on Ministry (Deputy Dottie Fuller): The Ministry Committee continued the work of revising Title III of the canons. General Convention 2003 had made major revisions on Canons 6 and 8, the Ordination of Deacons and Priests. This year the majority of the changes in these two canons were designed to make the steps parallel to each other. The two significant changes require financial support from sponsoring congregations and add a period of mentoring after ordination. No dollar amount of financial support is specified. Changes in Canon 10, Reception of Clergy from other Churches, set a minimum of 12 months from becoming a confirmed communicant to ordination, eliminated the requirement of 5 years experience in the previous denomination and added a requirement of mentoring following reception/ordination. Canons 11 and 12, Ordination and Life and Work of Bishops, were made parallel to the corresponding canons for Deacons and Priests.

Legislative Committee for Social and Urban Affairs (Deputy Gordon Gritter): This committee had a heavy agenda, dealing with such matters as:

- economic and occupational justice and human rights;
- racism, reconciliation, and proposals for slavery reparations;
- health care;
- issues of gender and "universal access" within the Church;
- ministries to prisoners, refugees, and disabled persons.

The Committee worked well together, and most of its recommendations were adopted by Convention.

Legislative Committee on Education (Deputy Wendy Smith): We considered and perfected about 25 pieces of legislation. Among the more important were the affirmation of the historically black

Episcopal colleges, and the resolution supporting theories of evolution as compatible with Christian faith. Jim Jordan from St. Jude's, Cupertino, came to testify at our hearing on that resolution. We proposed to the Convention the creation of a Standing Committee on education, which would work on educational policies for children, youth, young adults, and all adults in the church. This proposal was accepted, and I think our church will benefit from it. I came home from convention confident in the future of our church, because so many people are devoted to it, inspired by it, and committed to living out their faith as Episcopalians.

For an in-depth description of how General Convention functions, see: “A Structural Overview of the General Convention” written by Pat Waddell. The document can be found at: www.edecr.org.

ECR Deputies to the 75th General Convention: Dottie Fuller, chair (Good Shepherd, Salinas), the Rev. Ernest Cockrell (St. Andrew's, Saratoga), Dr. Gordon Gritter (St. Stephen's, San Luis Obispo), the Rev. Silvestre Romero (St. Philip's, San Jose), the Rev. Donna Ross (St. Paul's, Cambria), the Rev. Wendy Smith (St. Thomas, Sunnyvale), Mr. Frank Snow (St. Jude's, Cupertino), and Mr. Pat Waddell (St. Luke's, Los Gatos). The Rev. Vincent Raj (St. George's, Salinas) and Mr. Jim Wilson (St. Paul's, Cambria) served as Alternate Deputies.