



Highlights of diocesan news in printable format — July 20, 2022

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From Bishop Hughes

The power of community at General Convention

This is a transcript from a video message.

This is Bishop Hughes in the Diocese of Newark. About a week ago, the deputation from the Diocese of Newark, and I, returned from General Convention. And what a gathering that was. For those of you who don't have a lot of experience or knowledge about General Convention, it is the triennial – meaning every three years – the triennial gathering of the Episcopal Church. Sometimes we can think the Episcopal Church is the Anglican Church in the United States, and there is truth to that, but the Episcopal Church is international. We have churches in Latin American countries, in the Caribbean, we have churches in Taiwan. So there is an international aspect to our ministry as the Episcopal Church.

And bishops and deputies – and deputies are lay and ordained people, and every diocese gets to bring four of each – bishops and deputies gather. They work in two separate houses, making decisions, talking about ministry, deciding on the budget, helping to elect people to run the ministries of our church, praying together, worshiping together, spending time with each other – though this year was very different. General Convention used to be 14 days, it was cut back to 10 days, this convention should have

happened last summer, but was delayed a year, and then took place in four days. And then also with a lot of precautions being taken to keep everybody as well as possible.

People asked me what was it like to be in the House of Bishops, and I can't give you much of an answer within four minutes. That's how long I try to make these little videos. But I can say this, it's heartening to me to watch the bishops work and to watch the deputies work. We come together as individuals, and then we come together as dioceses, all of us with particular goals and particular things that are important to us. We all have an agenda. And then we get in the room together, pray together, ask God to show us what's the most important thing that we need to spend our time on, and where you listen to each other.

I think that was the most powerful part about being in the House of Bishops – I've been as a deputy before, but this is my first time being there as a bishop – was how the bishops listened to each other. We don't agree on everything. We are not of one mind on many things. But there was a real desire to hear each other. And we looked at some complicated and complex issues. How are we to think about what the Prayer Book looks like going forward? When there are people who feel underrepresented by the Prayer Book, it feels like the Prayer Book doesn't even recognize that they are there. How do we think about that going forward? How do we think about our response to people who are struggling with where we are in terms of reproductive rights of women? And we

are all over the map in response to that, but how do we make plans about that together? And then the thing that I think affects everybody in every church everywhere: what do we do with the resources God has given us? How do we devote people? How do we devote energy? How do we devote financial resources to doing ministry in a world that is so changed, and so challenged?

Listening to us, and there were times that all of us spoke and times when all of us listened. But being a part of that gave me such hope for the future. Because the thing that I'm aware of is that God speaks to all of us. And it is rare that any one of us is right all the time. All of us hold a piece of the truth, but we don't get the whole truth until we are there together. There's one last thing that had a strong impact on me. And it's not the first time I've seen it happen in the House of Bishops. But it's when a bishop stood up in front of everyone and apologize for their words that had been uttered in haste or harshly and they had hurt an individual person, another bishop, but publicly said before all of the bishops, I am sorry for what I have said to my sibling bishop, and I apologize to all of you bishops for that happening. And I promise that I will continue to do better on that. But I ask for everyone's forgiveness.

Powerful statements. Powerful ways to be in community. A way for us to consider how we are each in community at a time when the world tells us only you are right. Only you know the answer. Our life in communion tells us something different. That it is God who is right. And it is God who is guiding us and together when we are listening to God, we all find the answer.

If you want to know more about my experience at General Convention, please do ask me. I'm happy to talk about it and so it is all of the rest of the deputation, and we will be finding more ways to share it with you more fully.

General Convention News

A member of the Newark Deputation, the Rev. Diana L. Wilcox, wrote an article each day of General Convention describing the Deputation's work and experiences.

General Convention Eve - Thursday, July 7

Our Newark deputation traveled the highways and rails from New Jersey to arrive in Baltimore this week for the 80th General Convention of The Episcopal Church. This is a pandemic-shortened convention postponed from last summer, and much has changed. One thing that hasn't is that the laity, deacons, priests, and bishops gathered here in this place are hoping to be guided by the Holy Spirit in their work, and have fun doing it too.

Already here was the Pigeon Deputation (made famous at the 79th Convention), though when I tried to get a photo and comment, they claimed they were in Executive Session, no observers or testimony allowed. However, I have heard through those closely connected that they expect to make their voices heard from the rooftops in the days ahead, so stay tuned.

Our deputation gathered for an opening eve dinner hosted by Bishop Hughes. There were a lot of laughs, stories of conventions past, and more than enough food shared. Our Co-Chairs, Laura Russell and the Rev. Cynthia Black, have led us well over this past two years, and we are prepared to do the hard work that still lays ahead for us.

Yet this Convention does not really start tomorrow – it began months ago via virtual hearings and meetings. Those serving on legislative committees have been hard at work reviewing resolutions, hearing testimony, and discerning direction for the church. Tomorrow, we begin the legislative sessions that will allow both the House of Deputies

(clergy and laity) and the House of Bishops, to complete that work.

But before all that begins, we will gather together as a community at our Opening Eucharist to worship and give thanks to God for all that has been and all that may be. May we be led by the Spirit to do the work we are called to do in the days ahead.

Day 1 - Friday, July 8

After a year of waiting, video hearings, questions about whether any of this would happen at all, the 80th General Convention of The Episcopal Church was gaveled into session in both the House of Deputies and the House of Bishops. There were moments of joy, frustration, anticipation, and humor, yet through it all we managed to get Convention going for the good of the Church and our Gospel mission.

The day began in worship, with our Presiding Bishop bringing down the house as he preached about the gap between Jesus and his followers – between the love we are commanded to offer, and what others understood the church to be in this world.

As both houses gaveled in, we discovered that maybe the house wasn't the only thing brought down during the passionate homily. As voting members opened their V-Binders (iPads for work and voting) everyone soon found that there was no access to the internet. As many scrambled to try to fix the issue, everyone handled it with grace and humor, most especially the President of the House of Deputies, the Rev. Gay Jennings. Service was restored in time for the afternoon session.

As we continued, we took time for prayer and remembrance of those killed last month at St. Stephen's in Vestavia Hills, AL. The members of Alabama's deputation were brought forward to speak to resolution A226, which calls the church to recognize, honor, and lament the violence that took the lives of three members of that parish. The

chair of their deputation, the Rev. Candice Frazer, began and ended her statement with this, from John 1:5: "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness does not overcome it." President Jennings then asked that the vote in favor come by the silent affirmation of standing. Not a sole remained seated, which was the loudest and most powerful affirmation of the day.

Later in the House, our deputation's voices were heard on important justice issues, particularly racial reconciliation and truth telling. Deputy Anne Kitch and Alternate Deputy Elaine Thomas spoke to the importance of this work.

In the House of Bishops, there were long discussions on the proposed prayer book and hymnal revisions. There was also action in the world. The previous night there was a fatal shooting near our hotel and the convention center. The bishops took to the streets to call for an end to gun violence, with members of the House of Deputies joining the march.

There were also moments where this shortened convention was stress tested as people were calling for removing legislation off the Consent Calendar, which would move them to the floor for debate. While wanting to keep the convention short, and limit debate, all to ensure the safety of everyone attending, there was a building sense that too much had been placed on the Consent Calendar, and without the ability to speak to it at legislative committee hearings, voices had been silenced. These are the things that will inform us as we move from this convention to the next one, which is in just two years. In the end, some things did get removed and debated, and our good and faithful work continued into the night.

The day ended late in the deputation suite as we discussed the upcoming elections happening the next morning. The conversation was led by our Co-Chair, Deputy Laura Russell, and the discussion was helpful in our discernment.

Day 2 - Saturday, July 9

The second day of General Convention began with elections to key positions in the church within both Houses. The House of Deputies had the highly anticipated race for the next President of the House, as President Jennings' last term sadly comes to a close at the end of this convention.

While there were many good candidates for President of the House of Deputies (PHoD), the race quickly came down to two viable candidates: Julia Ayala Harris from the Diocese of Oklahoma and Ryan Kusumoto of the Diocese of Hawaii. Ms. Harris won on the third ballot.

Newark's own Laura Russell, Co-Chair of our deputation, was the top vote-getter (by 151 votes) for one of the positions on the Court of Review for Clergy Discipline, and we all celebrated... until we found out that the election had to be voided and re-done due to current geographical diversity requirements, which likely will be removed by a later separate resolution. So, while we put the balloons on hold, we know we will be bringing them out soon to celebrate her election.

The afternoon's legislative session in the House of Deputies featured an intense debate over the considerations the church should adopt with regard to women's reproductive health when choosing a site for future General Conventions. One resolution wanted the church to "consider" relocating the 81st General Convention, which is in just two years and scheduled for Louisville, Kentucky. Another, which asked that the 82nd General Convention site selection, and all future locations, take women's reproductive health into consideration. The debate centered on two approaches to our gospel mission: On the one hand, Louisville is in a state that is restricting a woman's right to make informed decisions about her own healthcare, so should we provide the economic boost our convention would bring. On the other, the choice of Louisville was in part due to a desire to respond to the murder of Breonna

Taylor. The same was said for Orlando, and the Pulse Nightclub massacre (Orlando being one of the proposed sites for the 82nd General Convention in 2027). There was also concern about the resolution regarding Louisville, given that it is already a shortened convention, with newly elected leadership – would changing the location be achievable at this late date? In the end, D054 regarding the 81st Convention in Louisville was defeated, and A001 regarding the 82nd and subsequent conventions was passed with the following amendment:

- That local conditions don't pose an "immediate threat" to attendees.
- That planners take steps to "ensure the physical, mental, and emotional well-being" of attendees.
- That the church will seek ways in the host city to "concretely witness to the counter-cultural Way of Love that Jesus models."

As we closed out the legislative day in the House of Deputies, we did have much to celebrate outside of elections. A resolution re-uniting the Diocese of North Texas (formerly the Diocese of Fort Worth) with the Diocese of Texas brought tears to the eyes of many as we were reminded of the pain of the actions of the breakaway group caused to the clergy and people of that part of the Lone Star State. After the schism, in which the state courts allowed the ACNA to strip the parishes there of everything – from the use of the name of the diocese to the vestments and altar vessels – the people, per the testimony of deputies from that diocese, were devastated. However, their faith led them forward into resurrection that renewed their ministry, strengthened their ties with one another, and helped them to see where Christ was calling them into new life. Part of that call was to re-unite with the Diocese of Texas, who welcomed them with open arms. The passing of this resolution brought the House to its feet in joy, celebration, and wonder at the amazing grace of God and the great hope that abounds now in Texas.

We then turned our attention to a matter that is close to the hearts of many in our diocese, A063, to create a Director of Women's and LGBTQI Ministries as a church-wide staff position. While three of us queued in to speak, the Rev. Cynthia Black and I were able to get to the microphone before debate ended to testify in support of this contested resolution. It was passed and we owe a great deal of thanks to Laura Russell for marshalling this through.

Meanwhile, the House of Bishops addressed the need for fair representation in the discernment process for elections to the episcopate and issues in the disciplinary process for bishops, and called for a cessation of the war in Ukraine and to tell the truth about racial injustice within the church, including the treatment of indigenous children at church boarding schools.

The House of Bishops also concurred with the House of Deputies on a number of actions, including creating a Task Force on LGBTQ+ Inclusion, and making paid family leave and health insurance for lay staff and clergy available through the Denominational Health Plan. And, the work of the bishops continued on the process and need for prayer book and hymnal revision.

It was another busy day for your deputation, but we know that the work we do is important, and there is more ahead as we move into our third day. Yet we know that as we enter the Lord's day, we will unite in our morning services with Episcopalians across the wider church as we give thanks to God, ask for Christ's blessing, and pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Day 3 - Sunday, July 10

As we moved into the second half of this very compressed General Convention, technology issues that plagued us in first few days continued, but so did the work of the church. Nothing can stop the Holy Spirit, not even really bad Wi-Fi.

The biggest news out of Day 3 was the joint session of the House of Deputies & the House of Bishops for the presentation of the budget for the next Tri... no wait, Bi... no..., well... Mini-enium, which will support the work of the church for the next two years (normally three). Keeping with the distinct nature of this convention, the bishops were not seated with their deputations, but were placed in the back of the hall to keep the "podding" in place (to guard against Covid transmission). Separated or not, we managed to pass the budget of \$100,493,452, and we amended the budgeting process too.

Specifically with regard to the budget process, Resolution A048 essentially ended the Joint Standing Committee on Program, Budget, & Finance (and hence, its existence) and keeps the process solely with Executive Council's Finance Committee. This was proposed as a way of making the process more efficient and ease the work that happens at General Convention. Prior to this resolution, the Executive Council would produce the budget, go through it with PB&F so that they could work with it and present it, and then work for months to modify it to meet the financial requirements of actions taken at General Convention. There was testimony for and against, but ultimately A048 passed.

The other big work of both Houses was to determine – what exactly is a book? Or perhaps, more to the point, how do we define the Book of Common Prayer (BCP) in an era when books take all forms – print, electronic, audio – and where there are multiple authorized liturgical resources that are not within the covers of the physical 1979 prayer book? For years, General Convention has sought to update our beloved BCP, yet several things stood in the way. Because we looked at this from a perspective of a bound book with covers, there was a sense of the enormity of the project in expense and time, and the need for there to be enough revisions needed to justify the effort. Resolution A059 would amend Article X of the

Constitutions of The Episcopal Church to expand the meaning of the prayer book to include all authorized materials. For example, *Enriching Our Worship* has been an authorized liturgical supplement, in use by many across our church. However, it was not part of what was understood to be our Book of Common Prayer. This would expand our definition of our Book of Common Prayer as being inclusive of *Enriching Our Worship*. The same would be true of other authorized texts. While there was much debate, this too passed.

In the House of Deputies, we did attempt to re-run the Court of Review election, which was sadly nullified because of provisions requiring provincial representation (that are soon to be extinct). However, Wi-Fi issues continued to plague the House, and after numerous attempts to proceed, the election was postponed to the final morning. This was especially frustrating to our deputation, as Laura Russell, the top vote-getter in the initial election (by 151 votes) had to wait multiple days to complete the election, so stay tuned.

There was one election that did manage to make it past the Wi-Fi gremlins, and it was for Vice-President of the House of Deputies. The Rev. Rachel Taber-Hamilton of the Diocese of Olympia was elected as the first ordained woman, and only the third woman to serve in this capacity. She is also the only First Nation (Shakan) person to hold one of the two leadership positions in the House. As she serves alongside the newly elected President of the House, Julia Ayala Harris, who is Latina, it will be the first time two women will lead the House, and two people of color, will hold both positions of leadership.

There were several measures, some on second read (which means the final vote needed), to commemorate additional saints of the church. One of them was to recognize the life and witness to Jesus of the late Rt. Rev. Barbara Clementine Harris, the first woman elected to the episcopate in the Anglican Communion. There was a strong desire to commemorate Bishop Harris, however,

the tradition of General Convention has been to wait 50 years after death before being entered into the calendar of saints. Still, this is not canonically required, and has been set aside in the past. The resolution passed allowed her historic consecration date, February 11, to be entered into Lesser Feasts & Fasts, while allowing more time for the Committee on Prayer Book, Liturgy, and Music to do a deeper exploration and consideration of this groundbreaking servant of Christ for consideration on our calendar of saints.

Both Houses condemned the actions of Russia in its war against Ukraine, passing Resolution B008 "A Call for Cessation of Conflict in Ukraine," and in Resolution A078 confirmed the social justice advocacy as a primary ministry of the Church.

Finally, there was joy and celebration again as we commemorated the Rev. Gay Clark Jennings, President of the House of Deputies for her outstanding service to the House and to the Church. She in turn presented numerous House of Deputies medals to those who had served the House with distinction, especially the Honorable Byron Rushing, a 16-time deputy to General Convention, who has served as Vice-President with distinction alongside President Jennings.

Final day - Monday, July 11

As we entered our final sessions of both the House of Bishops and the House of Deputies, we all heard great news on the COVID front. While there had been a small spread, it was insignificant due to the diligence of the planning team and all the participants. The infection rate, while low, was increasing daily, so the brevity of this year's convention, while not ideal, will curb that increase.

While we didn't always agree on resolutions or whom to elect to certain positions, our deputation had voted unanimously, for reasons none of us really know, to declare this a "Day of Pink." We all did our best to comply, even going out for a bit of shopping. Pink – it's what deputies of Newark wear!

In this last day, the House of Deputies revisited an earlier resolution, amending it, and passed it again. It was Resolution A138 to “allow Committee Meetings and Hearings prior to the start of General Convention.” While we did this virtually prior to this Convention, it was by Special Order due to the shortened length of the in-person meeting. To make this option available in the future, this resolution was needed. It will not eliminate in-person meetings of legislative committees but will encourage the use of virtual platforms to facilitate the legislative process and broaden participation across the larger church.

Our deputation finally got to truly celebrate Laura Russell’s election to the Court of Review after the election process and Wi-Fi issues were resolved and the House voted once more on these important positions. Congratulations (again) Laura!

The deputies from the Diocese of Louisville, Kentucky were called to the dais to offer their warm invitation for everyone to attend the 81st General Convention of The Episcopal Church, which they will be hosting in just two years. While the 81st is unlikely to be “the fastest two minutes” in church life, they did say they look forward to welcoming us.

We ended the convention in the House of Deputies with many courtesy resolutions, and a special address by outgoing President Jennings. After adjourning the meeting Sine Die (with no appointed date for resumption), Jennings then handed the gavel to our new President of the House of Deputies, Julia Aylala Harris. A new era has begun.

Tonight, the deputies and bishops will explore Baltimore in various ways offered by the host Diocese of Maryland, all of which include dinner. Some are taking a harbor boat ride, some are going on a self-led walking tour, and others are going to the American Visionary Art Museum. Tomorrow, we head home – tired, but knowing that there is

much hope for our work in the world as the Episcopal branch of the Jesus Movement.

Stories from Our Congregations

God, Science and Art Summer Program resumes after two-year pandemic hiatus

By the Rev. Miguel A. Hernandez

After two years of absence due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Holy Trinity, West Orange resumed its annual God, Science, and Art Summer Program for the youth of the Church and in the community. The program was held in the church’s Parish Hall every Saturday afternoon from June 4 to July 2, 2022.

Each of the Program’s five sessions started with a reading from the creation story in the Bible to establish the connection between creation, science, and the gift of nature and life. We encouraged the youth to care for the environment.

The program continued with its science component, using the Radio Shack electronic kits which allowed them to discover how everyday things around them function. We also organized other hands-on projects involving painting and drawing. As was done at previous programs, the participants were introduced to new topics of advanced mathematics, such as Number Theory, the Fibonacci Sequence, the Pascal’s Triangle, and important facts about the circle and its applications.

The participants also had the opportunity to hear from several professionals who were invited to speak about their careers so that the youngsters could realize that there are numerous options for their future lives in various vocations.

It was gratifying to see the students’ interest in the program as they stayed well past closing time

working on their individual projects. We express our gratitude to St. George's, Maplewood, for the mentors they provided this year, as well as the gifts of backpacks filled with school supplies for the students.

We also would like to report that some of the past students in the God, Science, and Art Summer Program have graduated from college, and others are entering college this year.

Diocesan Announcements

Clergy ministry transitions

Arrivals

- **June 1 - The Rev. Raul Ausa,**
Rector, Trinity, Allendale
- **June 12 - The Rev. Aaron Oliver,**
Priest-in-Residence, St. Gregory's,
Parsippany
- **June 15 - The Rev. Ellen Kohn-Perry,**
Priest-in-Charge, St. Paul's, Chatham

Departures

- **Sept. 15 - The Rev. George Wong,**
Rector, Church of the Saviour, Denville
- **Sept. 18 - The Rev. Tristan Shin,**
Assistant Priest, Christ Church, Short Hills

Episcopal House summer closings

Summer Fridays: From July 1 through Aug. 26, Episcopal House will close for the weekend at 1 PM on Fridays.

Week before Labor Day: All members of the Bishop's staff are using their vacation time to take off the week of Aug. 29 - Sept. 2, closing Episcopal House until Tuesday, Sept. 6.