

DEPUTIES TO GENERAL CONVENTION

The General Convention of the Episcopal Church met for nine legislative days from July 5 to 13, 2018, in Austin, Texas, although much of the work of convention began several days in advance. The Diocese of Pittsburgh was well represented by our deputation consisting of the Rt. Rev. Dorsey McConnell, the Rev. Nancy Chalfant-Walker, the Rev. Dr. Jim Simons, the Rev. Kris Opat, the Rev. Jeffrey Murph, Mr. Jon Delano, Mr. Michael Braxton (Chair), Ms. Lisa Brown, and Mr. Jamie McMahan. Alternates who attended were the Rev. Nancy Threadgill, Mr. Steve Stagnitta, and Dr. Joan Gundersen. We were sorry that the Very Rev. Scott Quinn was unable to attend due to illness.

As the governing body of The Episcopal Church, General Convention meets every three years and is ordered in two houses, the House of Bishops (all bishops, active and retired) and the House of Deputies (up to four elected laity and four elected clergy from every diocese). These two houses meet and act separately at the General Convention, and both houses must concur to adopt a particular piece of legislation. Part of this process is the use of Legislative Committees, made up of members from both houses, which sit together to debate, amend, and hear testimony on all legislation that has been proposed.

Several members of our deputation served on a legislative committee: Dorsey McConnell (Committee to Receive the Report on Resolution A169 – Prayer Book Revision), Michael Braxton (Ministry), Jim Simons (Dispatch of Business – Chair), Nancy Chalfant-Walker (Rules of Order), Jon Delano (Social Justice & United States Policy), and Jamie McMahan (Stewardship & Socially Responsible Investing). Two alternates also assisted with committee work as legislative aides: Steve Stagnitta (Evangelism and Church Planting) and Kris Opat (Christian Formation and Discipleship). All deputies and alternates attended various legislative committee hearings and many provided testimony to those committees on issues facing the convention. During the course of General Convention, Michael Braxton was elected as a trustee of The General Theological Seminary in New York.

With over 500 resolutions proposed, amended, and debated, it would be challenging to summarize everything that occurred at General Convention. Some highlights were the re-admission of the Diocese of Cuba as a full member of The Episcopal Church; and resolutions in support of evangelism, against racism, in support of women in the church, for the care of the environment, for support of transgender persons, and for just treatment of immigrants. In addition, convention approved a three-year operating budget for The Episcopal Church of \$133.8 million.

Of particular note was discussion around a potential revision of the *Book of Common Prayer 1979*. The General Convention decided not to undergo full-scale revision at this time, but to form a task force to study what that might look like to begin the process in the future, as well as to memorialize the current *Book of Common Prayer*. Convention also authorized, for trial use, several revised Eucharistic prayers that take into account inclusive and expansive language. In addition, as part of what some called a “grand compromise,” a provision was made to extend the use of the rites to bless same-sex marriages to all dioceses in The Episcopal Church, including those whose bishops have theological objections.

For full coverage of events and resolutions at the General Convention, see www.episcopalnewsservice.org. For more specific information and the full text of resolutions, see www.vbinder.net. News from the House of Deputies can be found at houseofdeputies.org.

The deputation was honored to represent the Diocese of Pittsburgh. General Convention will next meet in Baltimore, Maryland, in 2021.

Jamie McMahan
Deputy to General Convention