

General Convention July 5-13

Deputies

Lay

Ms. Beth King, Deputation Chair, St. Philip's
Ms. Angela Williamson, St. Martin's
Mr. John Andrews, Grace Calvary
Mr. Bruce Garner, All Saints

Clergy

The Very Rev. Mary Demmler, St. James'
The Very Rev. Sam Candler, St. Philip's
The Rev. Dr. Sharon Hiers, Epiphany
The Rev. Jeff Jackson, St. Margaret's

Alternates

Lay

Ms. LaFawn Gilliam, St. Luke's
Mr. Les Callahan, St. Anne's

Clergy

The Rev. Cynthia Park, Grace, Gainesville
The Rev. Patricia Templeton, St. Dunstan's
The Rev. Deacon Arthur Villarreal, Christ, Macon

Some stats from General Convention July 5-13:

- 517 resolutions were dealt with: 19 incomplete, 498 complete
- Hot topics: Prayer Book revision, trial use of marriage liturgy, same sex marriage, return of Cuba as a diocese of TEC, Israel/Palestine issues, immigration, evangelism, racial healing, justice and reconciliation, and of course the budget. (and the pigeons!)
- Legislative sessions: 47 hrs.
- Legislative committees and hearings: 29 hrs.
- Worship: 38 hrs.
- Round trip to Austin: 951 miles and 2hrs. flight time
- Approximate steps tracked during GC: 82,000+
- Average sleep per night: 5 hrs., or less

Bishop Curry repeatedly exhorted us to "Follow the Way of Jesus" both in Austin and on returning home. He reminded us that what happens in Austin *better not* stay in Austin! This was to be continuing work, personally and in community. We practiced this throughout our work there and imagined how we might live it out at home, inviting the whole diocese to join us.

Opportunities are being planned to discuss such things as Prayer Book revision, Immigration, Israel/Palestine, and same sex marriage. The deputies will no doubt find ways to share what happened in

Austin. As was mentioned in publications we took all of you with us; the name of every worshipping community in our diocese was displayed on the ribbons hanging from our “totem pole” which displayed dioceses’ names. We were aware of your presence with us.

During debate on the HOD floor, lay deputy Angela Williamson rose to speak in favor of the vetting resolution. During other debates, Atlanta lay deputies Bruce Garner spoke on resolutions affecting the LGBT community and Beth King spoke on dismantling racism resolutions. Dean Candler, as chair of a special legislative committee, presented resolutions and fielded questions on numerous topics relating to prayer book revision.

We all celebrated the joyful readmission of the Diocese of Cuba into The Episcopal Church correcting a serious wrong dating back to 1966. The heartfelt reunion was filled with tears, laughter and rejoicing - truly a once in a lifetime event to witness.

Voting on Resolution B012 addressing the accessibility of marriage in all dioceses of The Episcopal Church for same-sex couples was an energetic time. (Eight bishops had refused to allow same-sex marriages in their dioceses.) The mind of the church was clear: Marriage is to be available to all regardless of the diocese in which they live. The decision now rests with the rector or priest in charge rather than the Bishop Diocesan. Some resistance continues, but we are on the way to making *all* really mean *all* in our church.

We were reminded that The Episcopal Church is present not only in North America, but Central and South America, Europe, the Middle East, and the Caribbean – the largest diocese being Haiti. Ideas and attitudes that can feel “mainstream” here are still received as threatening in other places. Yet even in our times of strongly differing opinions, the whole deliberative body stayed together and made every attempt to think before speaking and to speak in love.

Our diocese is privileged to have several seasoned veterans-Sam Candler, Bruce Garner, John Andrews, and Angela Williamson. They deserve a lot of credit for their steadfast hard work. Sam’s advice to us all: “Throughout General Convention, my counsel to deputies (and bishops!) is always “to offer and then to let go.” In addition, new individuals brought fresh ideas and energy. The delegation was a great mix of differing GC experience, age, gender, sexual orientation and perspective. Several delegates served on GC committees: Sam Candler – Committee to Receive Resolutions for Prayer Book Revision, John Andrews - Ministry, Angela Williamson – Churchwide Leadership, Cynthia Park – legislative aide, and Beth King – Racial Justice and Reconciliation

So, to answer the question from last March, “And this means what to me?” - it means everything - to all of us. The work of GC eventually makes its way back to each parish, each pew, each conversation in Sunday School, each interaction with your fellow human. It all speaks to who we are as Episcopalians and who we are as beloved children of God.

The deputation from the Diocese of Atlanta proudly represented our church family in Austin at General Convention. Now they would love to come and share with you their experiences and answer any questions you might have about our time there, legislation discussed, the peripheral and worship offerings at GC, or anything else that interests you.

Peace and blessings,
Beth King, chair