

Special Report from the Iowa Deputation to General Convention 2006

Tues., June 13th Raisin Horn: Greetings from your General Convention deputation! The Presiding Bishop welcomed us yesterday to the House of Deputies, reminding us that we all are met with the opportunity in this place for God's love to break open within us. As we engage both in legislative action and corporate worship, the truth we seek is larger than any one point of view; truth is discovered in communion. We were reminded also that people tend to hold on tenaciously to their partial truths. The Presiding Bishop cautioned that the Convention's response to the Lambeth Commission and Windsor Process, in addition to the election of the 26th Presiding Bishop this coming Sunday, will be closely watched by the rest of the world. Our communion together obliges us to bear one another's burdens with patience, tolerance and love. He asked us to consider what it means for us, as the gathered Church, to live a life of communion for the sake of the world. In quoting Clement of Alexandria, Bishop Griswold expressed hope that we would not fall into the habit of "curling up in our preoccupations and obsessions in the manner of hedgehogs."

In today's homily during the first Convention Eucharist, Bishop Griswold also dared us to invoke the Holy Spirit, asking for deeper knowledge, understanding of deeper truth, and for God's work of reconciliation. "It is dangerous," he said, "to invoke the Holy Spirit; what if we are taken seriously?"

And so this first Legislative day began. The President of the House of Deputies (The Very Rev. George Werner) led us into preliminary activities, such as organization of the House, orientation to a new electronic voting process (during which we voted on the official food of the Episcopal Church – the cucumber sandwich option was defeated!) and the reception of official greetings from the House of Bishops.

The House of Deputies welcomed the Episcopal Church of Liberia and the Official Youth Presence, prayed Noonday prayers together led by our Chaplain, and received further greetings from our host diocese, and from the Presidents of the Episcopal Church Foundation and Church Pension Fund. During the afternoon legislative session, the Co-Chair of the Joint Nominating Committee for the Election of the Presiding Bishop detailed the proceedings and administrative process expected on Saturday and Sunday as the ballots are taken by the House of Bishops. Our own Maggie Tinsman (Deputy from St. Peter's, Bettendorf) had the honor of escorting the Archbishop of York to address the House of Deputies. He relayed a message from the Archbishop of Canterbury, as well as delighting us with his own response to the sight of so many gathered Episcopalians, along with the multitude of national flags draped behind the platform. As George Werner tells us, we should keep in mind that we are not a national church, but an international church.

This was a slow-moving legislative day, as sometimes happens at the start of Convention, but the House did consider resolutions concerning Provincial Leadership, Directions for Future Processes (such as nominations for Presiding Bishop), also fine-tuning the language regarding an upcoming trustee election and ongoing work with prison ministry. As the day concluded, many deputies were headed to meetings of their respective legislative committees, or to a "U2-Eucharist." Much happens in the evening hours at Convention; there are hearings to attend, meetings, and special events such as last night's dedication of a Time Line of Women's History in the Episcopal Church, in which The Rev. Barbara Schlachter (Alternate from Christ Church, Cedar Rapids) had a major role.

As we move ahead in our days of legislation, meeting, and worship, we ask the continued prayers of the Diocese of Iowa. As Bishop Griswold told us upon our arrival, love is never an abstraction; rather, it is expressed in webs of relationship. We honor our relationship with you, the faithful people in our home diocese, and we look forward to communicating ongoing events here in Columbus as they unfold.

Thur., June 15th Diane Bjorklund: This is my first General Convention and I understand that as a Provisional Lay Deputy (or Alternate) I am here to experience as much of General Convention as possible, learn about the process of General Convention, and serve where I am needed.

As of today, I have experienced a variety of worship services, a few resolution hearings, five legislative sessions and the exhibit hall. So far, my favorite worship service was the U2charist held Tuesday evening. This service combined the music of U2, dynamic preaching, and a focus on the MDG's. Participants numbered over 750 and spanned several generations and regions of the country and world. I felt a surge of energy as we left the worship space around the desire for our church to move forward in mission and support for the ONE Episcopalian campaign.

I have learned how a resolution travels from the Proposer to a legislative committee to one of the houses then back to committee and onto the other house. A resolution may get discharged, rejected, referred or adopted. Today I was following Resolution D034. It was assigned to Legislative Committee # 5, Cannons. The main emphasis of the resolution was to amend the Canon on Licensed Ministries by eliminating Confirmation as a requirement for Eucharistic Minister and Eucharistic Visitor so that young communicants could be licensed to these ministries. After a good discussion, the committee decided to discharge this resolution and refer to Legislative Committee #14, Ministry because it is the Ministry Committee that is charged to identify ministers of the church.

I have served as needed and in particular by being a Children's Worship Table discussion leader. Many volunteers from the Diocese of Southern Ohio put together a wonderful children's program. During Worship, the children

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first work on a gathering activity (today we made Anglican Prayer beads) then, during the discussion time, there is a time of reflection. The discussion starter questions were framed in the "Godly Play" language of "I wonder..." Our focus today was on John 4:19-24 and revolved around where the children worship God, what kinds of words to say in worship, and other ways to worship God in spirit and truth. And of course the children say the most insightful things: God can be worshiped everywhere even under a bed, we need to remember to say Thank you when we worship God, and we need to love everybody.

I am so thankful for this opportunity to serve our Diocese, to see our church working at the international level, to spend time with old friends and have the opportunity to make new friends.

Sat., June 17th The Rev. Cathleen Bascom: Sometimes, when I have tried to think holistically about all that goes on in the life of a parish I have imagined a kaleidoscope. Looking at a church's ministry is like seeing shafts and slices of color – our worship, one slice of color; our formation through study and private prayer another; our practical theology and struggles to understand; our moving out to justice and care for others; our treasured relationships – all colors which combine to portray the life we share in Christ. My experience of General Convention so far, is like magnifying that kaleidoscope of the church like a child's toy telescope is magnified when one visits the planetarium!

Worshipping together daily with thousands gathered is an experience in itself. As a Eucharistic minister one morning, the power of placing a piece of bread in the hands all so different from one another will remain for me a reminder the true breadth of the Episcopal Church. As a Midwesterner I forget the racial, economic and language diversity of the Episcopal Church. Yesterday we said the antiphon for Psalm 124 in English, Spanish, French, Tagalog, and Ojibwa. The man next to me was from Haiti and I could see his joy at the familiar French words. Except for Festive Eucharists, we spend time in Bible study and reflection after the sermon as part of the Eucharist, and members of my table come from Arkansas, the Virgin Islands, Washington D.C., Ohio, and Liberia. Little surprise to those who know me, my favorite worship was the U2-charist.

A special service to raise awareness and support for efforts against hunger, poverty and the lack of education, and health issues world-wide using rock band U2's music as hymns, was full of energy and young people and was so packed that one wondered if they would start opening the roof to lower people in! Needless to say, the worship and study at General Convention has been vibrant!

We spend the most intentional hours of each day in Legislative sessions; I joke and tell people it reminds me of being a

teenager and going to the State Capitol for "Youth in Government"! We function in two Houses (mirroring our own U.S. system in some ways) the House of Deputies (lay deputies and the deacons and priests) and the House of Bishops. Legislation goes back and forth between the two Houses needing to be passed by both. Some of the 300+ resolutions we will vote on are practical guidelines for church life and government, but as we debate things of substance we really are doing practical theology. In budget conversations we must weigh things like money to plant new churches versus giving money to help refugees in Sudan – just as any parish might only on a much larger scale. There have been open hearings on the Windsor Report and the Episcopal Church's responding 11 resolutions, but to date we have only debated and dealt with one of these resolutions. Passing Resolution A159 we have articulated our desire to "reaffirm our abiding commitment of the Episcopal Church to the fellowship of churches that constitute the Anglican Communion, and seek to live into the highest degree of communion possible..." The ten resolutions before us still will most likely generate substantial debate about human sexuality and our place in the Anglican Communion on which other Deputies will report in the next days.

Lastly, I would say that the General Convention, as is true in our parishes and Diocese, is very much about relationships. You see hugs given, heartfelt handshakes and the shouts of old friends reunited. I sat last night as our Presiding Bishop Frank Griswold was honored (an event slightly akin to a churchy Academy Award with roasts, biographical skits, eloquent speeches and skits) and was aware of the quiet tears of a few people who have traveled the road of the church with this man in this time. In about an hour the Bishops gather for worship and then to elect the next Presiding Bishop, and a new unique leadership relationship for us all will be born.

Sat., June 17th Maggie Tinsman: What a day of celebration this has been! Three one-of-a-kind ceremonies occurred. My day started very early (7:00 a.m.) as the Structure Legislative Committee met to plan a strategy for proposing four resolutions to the General Convention on Monday, June 19th. They are: 1) Proposing child care/education program for 0-to 12-year-olds for all General, Province, and Diocesan Conventions; 2) Proposing a change in the number of days from 10 days to 8 days for the next General Convention; 3) Proposing that each Standing Commission, which meets between conventions, be limited to 12 members; 4) Proposing that the Office of General Convention will convey electronically to all bishops, deputies, and alternates all filed resolutions on a weekly basis. I shall be speaking specifically to the Convention on Monday about this last resolution. All are fairly controversial because they entail change. (This church is not big into change.) However, we have discussed these issues for 3 to 6 years, so I believe that it is time to bring them up to the 800+ House of Deputies. I hope that all four will pass, but it is up to the will of the deputies now.

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An extremely large Festival Communion Service was held in the mid-morning with 8,000 people attending. I served as a Chalice Administrator, which was extremely meaningful with the large variety of people sharing communion. This truly was a beautiful service with wonderful music and an inspirational sermon about reconciliation.

After lunch with our youth from Iowa, we went back into our Legislative session for 2 ½ hours. Not much that was meaningful was accomplished. However, a wonderful tribute to Dean George Warner, outgoing President of the House of Deputies, was held. He is a fantastic man who unfortunately was not reelected deputy by the Pittsburgh Diocese because he is a middle-of-the-road Episcopalian. How well I know this situation in the political world!

Dinner was fun as four of us Iowa Deputies relaxed together. We then attended a marvelous celebration for the retirement of Presiding Bishop Frank Griswold. A dramatic presentation on the Holy Spirit was particularly entertaining and meaningful. We ended the celebration by singing "Here I Am, Lord."

Before going to bed after a very long day, part of the Iowa deputation got together for some joyful conversation. We really have a very friendly group of Iowans, so it is always fun the "touch base" at the end of the day. I feel very humble and privileged to be part of this active Iowa delegation. Exhaustion finally took over after I wrote this part of our ongoing journal.

Tues., June 20th Bishop Alan Scarfe: "It's a girl," says the latest badge fashion to be sported around General Convention. Within 24 hours of the surprise election of Katherine Jefferts Schori as the next Presiding Bishop, the badges were appearing. I think it is true to say that few people thought that this would be the time for our first female Presiding Bishop. For the electing Bishops, however, the signs of possibility appeared at our Spring House of Bishops where Bishop Jefferts Schori's presentation at the conversation with all of the nominees was considered striking and began to turn people to pay serious attention. I certainly began to believe it was a possibility.

Our day on Sunday as bishops began with Eucharist with all of the Convention. In a special dismissal we were asked to leave first and go on buses to Trinity Cathedral several blocks away from the Convention Center. The Church was cordoned off with police yellow tape, but unlike Philadelphia, the site of the last election, there was an absence of media or crowd attention.

We filed into the Church. Around the walls of the sanctuary was the timeline of the history of Women's ministry in the Episcopal Church, a coincidental but poignant occurrence. Iowa's Barbara

Schlachter is the Chair of the Standing Commission on Women's Ministry and had created the timeline with help from members of Christ Church, Cedar Rapids. It had been dedicated earlier in the week of Convention in recognition of

the thirty-year anniversary of women's ordination to the priesthood. At the end of the day, Mark Andrus, Bishop-elect of California, and I placed an additional reference to the end of the timeline: Katherine Jefferts Schori elected Presiding Bishop, June 18, 2006!

The election took place in an atmosphere of prayer and reflection, interspersed with hymn singing. The five ballots took four hours to complete, and then we waited for the response of the House of Deputies that took up another two hours. The balloting focused on two people from the second ballot onwards. Bishop Jefferts Schori took an early lead, but was quickly "caught" by Bishop Parsley. A shift appeared in the third ballot, where Bishop Jefferts Schori seemed to have gathered new impetus from votes moving from other bishops clearly no longer in the running.

There was minimum evidence of politicking in between the ballots. Most of the time, we stayed quietly and reverently in our pews. As the third ballot was being counted we broke for lunch. People were respectfully and gently inquiring as to the welfare of the various

candidates as they mingled among us. The care of one another as bishops is an aspect of this House of Bishops that does not get the recognition it deserves. It is the fruit of several years of increased meetings and intentional small group ministry, and it is fine example to the rest of the Church.

By the fourth ballot there were only two candidates with substantial votes and Bishop Jefferts Schori seemed to move within a few votes of election. When I began to see the retired Bishops, some who were known for their more conservative stances in current Episcopal issues, come up to greet Bishop Jefferts Schori, I gathered that history was about to happen. And it did, in that economy of God by which she received the exact number of votes needed for election. The Spirit had surprised us again.

Episcopalians in Iowa have experienced firsthand the ministry of our new Presiding Bishop elect as she was keynote speaker and preacher at the Convention in 2001 as you moved into your own Episcopal election year. She will continue to offer that deeply centered spirituality that has marked our Presiding Bishop's leadership under Bishop Griswold being very much a devotee to desert spirituality.

She comes from the deserts of Nevada, but also from the experience of a diocese of vast contrast, with many small churches developed over time in total ministry models on the one hand, but the fastest growing icon of secular life – Las Vegas on the other. There she has worked on creating a different way of doing church to meet the demands of such a population. Her professional life as an oceanographer and university teacher before ordination has given her a serious sense of the precariousness of life on the planet. It is my hope that she will lead us to play a leading part in the stewardship of God's creation.

She was one of the few bishops to attend our budget hearing at this Convention and make an appeal to lend

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ourselves to the fulfillment of our part of working for the UN Millennium Development Goals as our response to the Gospel, especially Luke 4: 16. In her own diocese she had led the members to do significant work in Kenya at a time when the Kenyan Church is not very happy with us. In fact reconciliation continues to be one of her themes of ministry, as well as mission.

For me it is the very speed of her life's accomplishments as an ordained person that is most intriguing and hopeful. She would be the first to say that it all takes her breath away. I take great hope in this, for it means that her ministry will be dependent on the One who created it, the Holy Spirit of God. This is how each of our lives in Christ should be. How it all works out incarnationally we have yet to see, but I trust that we will offer our prayers to God on her behalf. As she said to the bishops in her acceptance statement immediately after recollecting herself at the announcement of the election, "we all do this (ministry) together – you are not off the hook!"

Today (Tuesday) we march into the heart of the Windsor Report resolutions, and that as they say is probably another story yet to be told. Pray for us.

Wed., June 21st The Rev. Willa Goodfellow: In Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. (2 Corinthians 5:19) Reconciliation - this is what we are about. We have heard these words over and over in the last ten days at General Convention. You will hear them again this Sunday. God has entrusted to us the ministry of reconciliation. Last week Senator (and Episcopal priest) John Danforth told us that the Episcopal Church is uniquely positioned to be reconcilers in the world.

How can that be? We disagree so loudly about so much! And that is the point. People who agree on everything don't have to be reconciled. They never learn how to reconcile. So they cannot carry the message of reconciliation to the world. In the vastness of 10,000 bishops, deputies, delegates, local and international visitors, worshippers, exhibitors and shoppers, there are thousands of moments when we live Paul's words, when we carry out the message of reconciliation. My report from General Convention is on one of those moments.

Mon. night the House of Deputies recessed, while in the middle of debate of a contentious resolution, calling for moratoria on the elections of gay men and lesbians to the episcopacy and on public blessings of same sex unions. Our deputation was not of one mind, and on Tues. morning we knew we would vote a divided ballot.

On the way to daily Eucharist, I saw Kathleen Milligan and Cathy Bascom at a table outside our hotel, and overheard them discussing the matter. I stopped to pull up a chair. Maggie Tinsman joined us. Among the four, we represent the range of positions held by people of the diocese of Iowa. We also know each other well enough that we are bound by profound respect for each other's faith and integrity. We laid all that on the table, along with the pain of the disagreement, and our dismay at how these disagreements are sometimes expressed less honorably and less respectfully in the Church.

All the while that we talked, across the street in the convention center, the Gospel was being proclaimed. The bread was being blessed, broken and shared. So we picked up the remains of a blueberry muffin and did the same. "This is the body of Christ, broken for us, and we are the body of Christ. We, too, are broken, and yet we are one in the body of Christ." We gave each other the bread. Kathleen reminded us of words from Stephen Bayne, that in its most sacred moments, the Episcopal Church disappears. When we bless in baptism, and when we break bread in the Eucharist, we act not as the Episcopal Church, but as Christians. As Paul said it in 2nd Corinthians, we act as ambassadors for Christ, God's agents of reconciliation.

Okay, I am not recommending a new blueberry muffin liturgy, but I invite you to imagine that the power of God, the power of reconciliation is strong enough to endure, to hold us

together even when we know just how deeply we disagree, even when we take the chance to tell each other how deeply we disagree. General Convention is messy. It is filled with conflict. It is also held in God's hands, whose hands are well able to hold us together, any of us who are willing to be held together. We don't have to put on our false faces. We don't have to hide who we are. You don't have to hide who you are. You just have to keep coming to the table where the body of Christ is broken and shared.

As we share that bread, all of us who are broken are brought back together again. And then we are sent out to carry the message of reconciliation to a broken world, for whom Christ died, to bring it together again.

National Public Radio interviewed
Presiding Bishop Frank Griswold
on the Fresh Air program June 28, 2006.

Go to this website to hear it:

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5518200>

Iowa's representation at General Convention

Iowa Deputies

Willa Goodfellow, Diocesan Ministry
Development Team
Kathleen Milligan, St. Alban's, Davenport
Warren Frelund, St. John's, Mason City
Cathleen Bascom, St. Stephen's, Newton
Tim Vann, SW Iowa Region-Shenandoah,
Red Oak, Glenwood, Council Bluffs
Ellen Bruckner, Christ Church, Cedar
Rapids
Raisin Horn, Seminarian,
Maggie Tinsman, St. Peter's, Bettendorf
Nancylee Ziese, Christ Church, Cedar
Rapids
Diane Bjorklund, St. John's by the
Campus, Ames

Other Representatives from Iowa

Adam Eckert, (Official Youth Presence
Representing Province VI), Trinity, Iowa
City
Barbara Schlachter, (Standing
Commission on Women's Ministry)