

It was amazing to gather at the 79th General Convention in Austin with so many committed Episcopalians who were all working hard to address resolutions of worship, belief, governance, and finance. It was a place where important conversations took place about the life of our church. I was able to be involved in these important debates around our prayer book, evangelism by social media, gun violence, immigration, sexual harassment and the #metoo movement, care of creation, and stewardship and responsible investment, among many more. It was a place of spiritual renewal where many times we prayed prior to a vote on a resolution and attended spirit filled worship services every day where the words were stirring and inspiring.

On Sunday, July 8th, I began the morning attending a very moving rally with Bishops United Against Gun Violence where the main speakers were Philip and April Schentrup whose daughter Carmen was murdered in the Parkland High School shooting. All the speakers were very strong and motivating to work for peace. For many, the next activity was to load on buses to go to the Hutto Detention Center for women immigrants. Many of the women at this center were separated from their children. The Presiding Bishop told the 1000 gathered: 'We do not come in hatred, we do not come in bigotry, we do not come to put anybody down, we come to lift everybody up. We come in love'.

One of the highlights for me happened on July 11th when both the House of Deputies and the House of Bishops voted unanimously to re-admit the Episcopal Church of Cuba as a diocese of The Episcopal Church. As Bishop Griselda said 'I feel the breath of the Holy Spirit'. It was truly a moving moment.

Our days were filled with committee meetings and hearings, then legislative sessions, and worship. Our Utah deputation met with Bishop Scott most lunch times to talk about the days meetings, sessions and resolutions coming up for vote that day. The days were long and arduous but very gratifying knowing the good work we were accomplishing.

Which leads to my final reflection, I am grateful the way our church honors disagreement and difference as it did during some of the debates for the resolutions, some which were highly charged, but we could still demonstrate a commitment to relationship and communion. I feel very grateful and privileged to have been elected as a deputy at the 79th General Convention of The Episcopal Church. Thank you for your confidence in me.

Thank you,

Nancy Tanner

The 79th General Convention
By Isabel Gonzalez

While attending the convention in Austin, Texas I had the honor of learning and understanding issues/reforms within our church. One of the many experiences of which I had the opportunity to witness was the reunification of the church of Cuba. When everything seemed like nothing would change for our Cuban brothers and sister; after countless days of working toward a resolution and presenting, A238. Everything changed, what a historic day. When the house of bishops and the house of deputies voted unanimously; that the reunification was possible. My eyes were filled with tears as we watched, the house of deputies. We all received our Cuban brothers and sisters with open arms, we applauded in honor and as they placed the official Cuba banner a few steps away from our Venezuelan brothers and sisters. This was an unforgettable experience, in which I will always remember. Another unforgettable event in which I had the honor and opportunity to be part of was the house of deputies; where several resolutions were approved, of the utmost importance for our communities and churches. For me, it was also a pleasure to attend Texas night. Where we listened to music, but above all we were with our presiding Bishop Michael Curry. He invited us again and again to follow the path of love, with words or wisdom, prayer, and music. He reminded us that as Christians, that the love of Jesus has power to change lives and overall make a difference and change the world. I believe that power of God, and through the power of the Holy Spirit, it was possible for me to work for his kingdom for 13 days in Austin, Texas. It was the movement of Jesus that helped us, in which the episcopal church of Cuba was re-admitted; because of the movement, Jesus is the basis of respect, diversity, solidarity, but above all excludity. Because God has given us the first two commandments, we cannot forget, in the Gospel of St. Mark in Chapter 12: verse 30-31 says "love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength", but there is a second: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' Just like Jesus did.

GC2018 Report
Rhonda Park Uber

It was such an honor to be a deputy at General Convention. It was both fascinating and a bit overwhelming to see how the Episcopal Church conducted business during the 10 days we were in sessions. It was truly an amazing week and I hope to be able capture the highlights during my time in Austin.

GC18 started off with a listening session by the House of Bishop. This session was created in response to the #MeToo movement. Over the course of this session, various bishops and clergy read stories written by victims. It was really moving and rather eye opening to hear these accounts and it definitely highlighted the need for more discussion and action. Fortunately the church has been working on creating a new website, with videos and resources, to aid in the response.

On Saturday, July 7, we were treated to “Big Tent Revival.” Inspired by Bishop Curry’s evangelism initiative, the night did not disappoint. The spirit of the Lord was felt throughout the giant room. Bishop Curry preached on love and how we as Episcopalians can share our love through our actions and commitments to service.

On Sunday, July 8 the day at the Bishops United Against Gun Violence. In addition to prayers, the family of Carmen Schentrup spoke. Carmen was among the students killed at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. The family spoke of the pain and struggles they have and continue to experience since that fateful February 14 day. They cited how they leaned on their faith to help them through this pain. It was hard for me not to tear up as I listen to their story and how amazing it was for them to channel their pain into advocating for a safer America.

Later on Sunday, we traveled to the Hutto Detention Center, in rural Texas, to advocate against the separation of children from their families seeking asylum at our borders. During the vigil, some of the 1000+ people walked over to the front of the detention chanting “We see you,” “We love you,” and “You are loved.” We could see hands in the window waving in response. It was reported the next day that the women were glued to the windows and watched until the last bus left.

One of the big highlights of the week was the resolution, which passed unanimously, to bring Cuba back into the fold of the Episcopal Church. After the vote and very prolonged standing ovation, Bishop Delgado del Carpio addressed the deputies and said “she could feel the spirit blowing through the entire convention.” It was so amazing to witness seeing the deputies from Cuba get seated on the floor.

As we concluded our time, I had an overwhelming feeling that the work that was accomplished during convention was putting the church on a great course. There is still much work to be done but I felt that the leadership of Bishop Curry and House of Deputies President Gay Jennings with the amazing work being done by the committees that as a church we are going to truly be able to make “Jesus Movement” happen.

79th General Convention (GC) of The Episcopal Church – Highlights by David Reed

There were three joint sessions with the House of Bishops (HOB) joining the House of Deputies (HOD) in the HOD space for special presentations on:

Racial Reconciliation

Evangelism

Care of Creation

On Saturday night, we went by buses to the Palmer Center for an evangelism message by Presiding Bishop Curry.

Early Sunday morning Bishops United Against Gun Violence held a well-attended Public Witness. Phil & April Schentrup, whose daughter, Carmen, was killed at Parkland, Florida's Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School on Ash Wednesday 2018 gave very moving talks.

Worship services were held on most days during convention. The style of worship varied from day to day.

There were 517 resolutions introduced at GC. Action was completed on 503 resolutions and 14 were incomplete. The House of Bishops and the House of Deputies conduct separate legislative sessions during which the resolutions are considered. Either House may make changes to an introduced resolution and send it to the other House for action.

One of the major pieces of legislation was admitting the Episcopal Diocese of Cuba as a Diocese of The Episcopal Church (TEC). In 1966 House of Bishops action the Diocese of Cuba was separated from TEC. The Right Reverend Griselda Delgado del Carpio was brought to the HOD space after the HOD voted unanimously to concur with the HOB to readmit the diocese of Cuba. A lengthy celebration ensued.

The Convention voted to create a Task Force on Liturgical and Prayer Book Revision. The task force is to report to the appropriate legislative committee of the 80th GC. The 1979 Book of Common Prayer was memorialized as the Prayer Book "of record". Liturgical revision is to utilize inclusive and expansive language. Revised materials are to be professionally translate into English, Spanish, French, & Haitian Creole.

Same-sex couples will now be able to marry in their home parish even if their Diocesan bishop has moral objections to gay marriage. Under the new rule, couples can request gender-neutral marriage rites, which were approved for trial use at the 78th GC, in the parish where they worship. If the local bishop opposes same-sex weddings, the parish priest can still conduct the ceremony, requesting "pastoral support" from a bishop in another diocese if necessary. (Under the rules adopted at the 78th GC, the Diocesan bishop made the final decision on same-sex weddings.)

The TEC budget for the 2019-2021 triennium is \$133,859,718. Mission program is \$74,792,465; Administration is \$40,291,471; and General Convention is 18,775,648. Dioceses fund part of the budget through annual Askings of 15% of income over \$140,000.

My on-site Convention work began on July 3 with a meeting of the Social Justice and US Policy Committee of which I was a member. The committee had met via telephone conference two times before Convention and met eleven times during the first seven days of GC. We held hearings on the resolutions referred to the committee and for some of the resolutions several persons testified. The committee was made up of 5 bishops, 10 priest/deacon members, and 10 lay persons. Bishops and Deputies voted separately on any action requiring a vote. Importantly, the Episcopal Office of Government Relations in Washington DC uses resolutions adopted by GC as the basis for Congressional lobbying. Following is a brief description of some of the committee's resolutions which were adopted by GC:

Support non-discrimination and civil rights. Decry the use of expressions of explicit racial malice and racially coded language by political leaders. Express dismay at statements expressing animosity and fear toward Muslims.

Ask for repair of America's safety net. Direct Office of Government Relations to advocate unflaggingly for the federal government to close gaps in the safety net which cause millions of Americans to suffer eviction, homelessness, inability to access health care, medical debt, and hunger.

Condemn the use of solitary confinement as a form of torture.

Death penalty abolishment.

Mass incarceration changes to include reducing excessive sentences for non-violent crimes.

Engage the Church in advocacy for disability rights.

Support transgender rights.

Reduce sexual harassment, assault, and exploitation in the work place.

Support of one person, one vote.

Address the issue of voter suppression.

Immigration – support keeping families together.

Respect the dignity of immigrants.

Keep faith in US military recruits. Condemn US DOD policy shift to discharge non-citizen immigrants from their voluntary service in the US Armed Forces.

Thank you for electing me as a Deputy to the 79th GC.

79TH GENERAL CONVENTION OF THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH
REPORT – SUBMITTED BY
The Rev. Mary S. Janda, Vicar of St. Stephen's
West Valley City, Utah

Two themes come to mind when I reflect on our 79th General Convention: The Beloved Community (borrowed from The Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.) and The Episcopal Branch of the Jesus Movement (our Presiding Bishop, The Most Rev. Michael B. Curry). They are bonded together in a deep sense of our faith and belief offered in The Episcopal Church around the world, for we are indeed an international church. One cannot operate or separate from each other, and that is what we tried to do during this convention.

This was my first time as Deputy and it was amazing. To be together with so many Episcopalians was a wondrous thing to behold. To know that I, along with the other Deputies, had an active role in participating in this legislative body, The House of Deputies, was empowering. The voices from The Diocese of Utah were heard and we carried out our duties to vote on each piece that was brought before us.

There were legislative committees concerned with: the stewardship and care of our earth; Anti-Racism, Dismantling Racism, Healing and Reconciliation; world issues such as bringing The Episcopal Church of Cuba back into our collective body, and figuring out how we could offer hope to the conflict between the state of Israel and the Palestinian people; liturgical revisions that can allow us to make some immediate additions to our rich worship from the Book of Common Prayer and to move forward with other revisions that could take as long as twelve years; changes in the canons, specifically Title IV issues with clergy; matters concerning the future election of the next Presiding Bishop; elections of people to special councils and The House of Deputies; investing responsibly in weapons in an attempt to weigh in on changing the usage of guns in our society; to move towards equal pension considerations for clergy and laity; to improve our movement on Evangelism; as well as many other orders of business.

I encourage people to run for The House of Deputies for the next convention in 2021 in Baltimore, Maryland. We need voices from our diocese to participate in the larger work of the church that will affect us here at home.

Humbly submitted,
The Rev. Mary S. Janda

MY EXPERIENCE OF GC2018
Steve Hutchinson

Last month, I was blessed to be able to serve the Church as a Lay Deputy from our Diocese to the General Convention. The experience of General Convention varies widely among participants, depending on their role on legislative committees inspirational opportunities through attendance at special events and worship services, chances to meet and converse with people from other dioceses and other countries, and to actually influence the final form of resolutions adopted by the Convention. It is a blessing to be able to participate in decisions of great magnitude in the Church, including new understandings of marriage, strong actions on the immigration front, support for Indigenous Ministries and many other topics.

The experience is phenomenal for first timers or for veteran deputies like me (this was Convention #13 for me.) While experienced deputies are more frequently placed on legislative committees to provide expertise in legislative procedures and church polity, first time deputies also offer fresh voices and ideas to the discussions and debates. The diversity is striking and wonderful.

I served on two committees, the Resolutions Review Committee, which acted in subcommittees to preview every one of the 500+ resolutions submitted for consideration to be sure the resolutions were in proper form and would not violate any current Constitutional or Canonical provisions. My legislative committee was Safeguarding and Title IV Committee, which handled about 50 resolutions dealing with issues of clergy misconduct and disciplinary procedures. This is an area in which I have been active in canonical development and misconduct prevention since 1994.

I found the special event and worship services to be exceptionally inspiring, including the liturgies, music and preaching. Presiding Bishop Curry held an incredible Revival meeting attended by probably 5,000 or more people. All of the days, especially for those with committee assignments involved activity from 7:30 a.m. until about 9:00 p.m. each day, with scant time for meals, rest or opportunity to visit the extensive Exhibit Hall (with about 400 booths.)