

118th Convention of the Episcopal Church in Utah

Report of the General Convention 80 Deputation

Members:

Clergy: The Rev. Gabriel Atem, The Rev. Isabel Gonzalez, The Rev. Christopher Szarke, & The Rev. Kurt Wiesner.

Lay: Ms. Sandra Corp, Ms. Kristin Madden, Ms. Rhonda Uber (Dispatch of Business Committee), Mr. David Reed (Social Justice & International Policy Committee and Deputation Chair during General Convention 80), & Mr. Joseph Frank (Alternate Deputy). Mr. Steve Hutchinson participated in the Convention Resolution Review Committee but did not attend General Convention.

Mandate: General Convention is the primary governing and legislative body of The Episcopal Church. General Convention is comprised of two houses: the House of Bishops and the House of Deputies. Each diocese of The Episcopal Church is entitled to four clergy deputies (priests or deacons) and four lay deputies.

Goals: To participate fully in the legislative committees to which deputies are appointed and to attend General Convention 80, participate in legislative deliberations, and exercise good judgement in voting on legislative matters coming before Convention.

Analysis of context and action taken by General Convention 80:

(This summary is indebted to the article written by Mary Frances Schjonberg of Episcopal News Service entitled [“80th General Convention wrap-up: shortened, masked, tested, legislated”](#))

General Context

The 80th General Convention was postponed a year because of COVID-19. Concerns over the potential for outbreaks led Executive Council to allocate \$50,000 for a public health expert, Dr. Rodney Coldren, to advise President Jennings. With consultation of the leadership and a committee, General Convention was shortened from eight days to four where only Bishops, Deputies, and essential presenters, staff, and event support would be present.

That meant no Exhibit Hall filled with the life work and breadth of The Episcopal Church.

That meant no visitors, that meant no Episcopal Youth Presence. It was a huge loss in the way we value gathering as The Episcopal Church, due to the commitment of keeping people as safe as possible. There Deputies and Bishops had to COVID test every morning, wear masks at all times, not worship together, and have sermons prerecorded.

1,200 people attended rather than the expected over 10,000.

COVID still did what it does during Convention: it spread, we had more cases every day, but the numbers were considerably lower than what was projected thanks to these hard decisions.

Presiding Bishop Michael Curry asked during the planning process that we focus to “ matters essential for the governance and good order of the church.” Even with this reality, there were 412 resolutions filed for consideration.

Legislative committees acted online on most of the resolutions before gathering in Baltimore.

We passed most of the resolutions in batches through consent calendars, debating more controversial measures or actions we wanted to raise to greater prominence.

The Episcopal Church Budget

[\\$100.5 million budget for the next biennium](#) (the 81st General Convention is scheduled for the summer of 2024).

Convention changed the budget process itself [by eliminating the Program, Budget and Finance Committee](#), empowering Executive Council to present its budget proposal directly to General Convention through a standing budget committee.

Reckoning With Its History Of Racism

The Episcopal Church is committed to know and uncover its history, promote a process for truth telling, and a commitment to transform shared leadership and to make change.

[A086](#) – **Care of Creation Care & Environmental Racism** This resolution would allocate money to set up a task force to develop and support programs which respond to eco-justice concerns, environmental racism, and to help alleviate environmental burdens on Indigenous communities, as well as provide training and financial aid.

[A125](#) – **Beloved Community** This resolution includes \$400,000 in start-up funds to establish a voluntary Episcopal Coalition for Racial Equity and Justice among dioceses and organizations. The intent is to facilitate, coordinate, encourage and support efforts by Episcopal entities toward racial justice and equity, and the dismantling of white supremacy. This work will be done in collaboration with the work of Executive Council and the staff of the Episcopal Church Center. Once the Coalition is constituted, it shall be funded with an annual draw of one-tenth of the trust & endowment funds available for general use in the Episcopal Church’s budget.

[A127](#) – **Telling the Truth about the Episcopal Church’s History with Indigenous Boarding Schools** This resolution is a promise to confront the Episcopal Church’s historic ties to the federal system of Indigenous boarding schools. It includes an appropriation of \$2,500,000 over the next biennium, or a commensurate amount, to the work of truth-telling and reconciliation around its role in these schools, with 4 main provisions for funding, as follows:

- the creation and support of a fact-finding commission;
- work of the Office of Indigenous Ministries to create an education resource regarding the church’s role;

- grant program to support the work of dioceses in both conducting their own research and preserving the stories of survivors; and,
- support the establishment of community-based spiritual healing centers in Indigenous communities to address the intergenerational trauma rooted in the church's role

Women's Ministries And LGBTQI Support

A063 – **Creation of a Director of Women's Ministries** requests \$300,000 for the 2023-2024 budget for a staff position of Director of LGBTQI and Women's Ministries, whose work would include:

- disseminate the anti-sexism training modules developed by the Task Force to Study Sexism in the Episcopal Church and referred to Executive Council (2018-21);
- collect and disseminate data relevant to gender and sexual orientation equality within The Episcopal Church, in collaboration with relevant agencies and boards of the Church;
- collect and develop multilingual, multicultural churchwide resources to support congregations, dioceses, provinces, mission areas, and churchwide governing bodies in living into our commitments to fully welcome and include people and communities of diverse genders, including transgender, non-binary, and Two-Spirit people;
- provide both in-person and on-line trainings and create networks to form and mobilize women and people of diverse gender identities and sexualities (lay and ordained) who can in turn lead faith-rooted trainings at the diocesan and parish level. The trainings would support the local church in addressing gender equality and in welcoming people of diverse genders and sexual orientations.

Resolutions Concerning Gun Violence

A226 – **Honoring St. Stephen's Episcopal Church and the Victims of June 16, 2022** GC 80 recognized the "faith and sacrifice of Water (Bart) Rainey, Sarah (Sharon) Yeager, and Jane Pounds, whose witness demonstrated the call of God's reconciling purposes by welcoming and eating with the stranger at a church potluck supper."

Convention rose in silent affirmation of this resolution to honor these three members of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in Vestavia Hills, Alabama, on June 16th, 2022 as well as the surviving 18 parishioners and friends who were there. June 16th will be recognized as a day of remembrance and prayer.

B003 – **Regulating Ghost Guns and 3D Printed Guns** The resolution called for the ban of ghost guns – the unserialized and untraceable firearms built by anyone using unfinished frames or receivers – and manufacture of firearms and firearm parts using 3D printers. All of these

should be regulated the same as all firearms, “including all oversight related to the provisions of the Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act.” The Office of Government Relations, members of the Episcopal Public Policy Network, and individual Episcopalians are encouraged to support legislation to ban and regulate such weapons.

B006 – **Investing in State-Level Gun Violence Prevention Advocacy** GC 80 urges U.S. dioceses to advocate, at the state level, safe gun legislation with the support of the Episcopal Church’s Office of Government Relations. The Joint Standing Commission on Program, Budget, and Finance are encouraged to consider allocating \$160,000 in support of this resolution.

B007 – **Investment in Community Violence Intervention to Prevent Gun Violence** This resolution called for investment in community-based violence intervention programs that “address gun violence as a public health issue; improve physical environments; strengthen anti-violence social norms; engage and support youth; reduce substance abuse; mitigate financial stress; reduce the harmful effects of the justice process; and confront the proliferation of guns,” to call upon Congress and the executive branch to allot funding to support this, and that The Office of Government Relations, members of the Episcopal Public Policy Network, and individual Episcopalians are encouraged to support funding for these programs.

Medical And Family Leave Policies

D083 - **Addressing the erosion of reproductive rights and autonomy**

Affirmed that all Episcopalians should be able to access abortion services and birth control with no restriction on movement, autonomy, type, or timing.

A001 – **Site for 82nd General Convention** including guidelines for selection that consider the safety of those attending

A003 - **Uniform Paid Family Leave Policy** urges but does not require dioceses to adopt uniform paid family leave policies for all employees. Convention adopted resolutions to offer paid family leave and health insurance to lay and clergy church employees through the Denominational Health Plan.

D034 - **Revise Denominational Health Plan Mandate** created a new task force to provide advice about the Denominational Health Plan, which is provided through the Church Pension Group. Note: Churches and dioceses are required to provide health insurance to clergy and some lay employees. The task force will provide the 81st General Convention in 2024 with options to reduce health insurance costs across The Episcopal Church.

Approved the first reading of a Constitutional Change to clearly define the Book of Common Prayer

A059, if passed on its second reading in 2024, amends **Article X** of the Constitution of The Episcopal Church. The current language of Article X established the method for revising the Book of Common Prayer, but did not specifically provide for adoption of authorized liturgies that are not proposed revisions to the existing book.

The proposed amendment defines the Book of Common Prayer as “those liturgical forms and other texts authorized by the General Convention.” In other words, liturgies that are not in the current 1979 Prayer Book – such as same-sex marriage rites and gender-expansive liturgies – could be elevated to “prayer book status,” whether they are replacing parts of the Prayer Book or standing on their own, without publishing a revised edition of the Prayer Book.

Over a dozen liturgical texts have been “authorized” – for trial use, experimental use, or simply “made available” – by General Convention over the years.

All authorized Episcopal liturgies are compiled at episcopalcommonprayer.org, which was created by the Task Force on Liturgical and Prayer Book Revision. Resolution A058 designated the site as the official liturgical website of The Episcopal Church.

Fort Worth-based Diocese of North Texas reunification with Diocese of Texas

The North Texas diocese, with 14 congregations and fewer than 4,000 members, was greatly diminished in membership by a 2008 schism, in which a majority of clergy and lay leaders in the Episcopal Diocese of Fort Worth voted to leave The Episcopal Church over disagreements about the ordination of women and LGBTQ+ people. Both dioceses have roots in the historic Diocese of Texas.

The 80th General Convention of The Episcopal Church culminated on July 11, 2022 with the passing of the gavel by House of Deputies President Gay Clark Jennings to Julia Ayala Harris, the new elected President of The House of Deputies.

[The Rev. Gay Clark Jennings](#) served as President from 2012 until 2022

[Julia Ayala Harris](#) is the first Latina and the youngest person elected to lead the house.

[The Rev. Rachel Taber-Hamilton](#) who is Shackan First Nation, is the first Indigenous and first ordained woman to serve as vice president.

Findings and conclusions: Due to the COVID pandemic, General Convention 80 was shortened from the previous Conventions’ eight days to four days. The legislative days were long and full. Much legislative committee work was done on Zoom and other electronic means prior to Convention.

Statement of how the group’s work fits into the mission strategy of the Diocese: The Diocese of Utah is a diocese of The Episcopal Church and our Deputation participates in the governance of General Convention.

Those who are interested in any of the activities or legislation of the General Convention are invited to contact any of the Deputies listed above. Thank you for this opportunity to serve!