

O God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, our only Savior, the Prince of Peace: Give us grace seriously to lay to heart the great dangers we are in by our unhappy divisions; take away all hatred and prejudice, and whatever else may hinder us from godly union and concord; that, as there is but one

# GOD IN THE PROCESS

A QUICK ORIENTATION GUIDE FOR GENERAL CONVENTION

Adapted from *God in the Process GC 2003* by Matthew P. Payne

Body and one Spirit, one hope of our calling, one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of us all, so we may be all of one heart and of one soul, united in one holy bond of truth and peace, of faith and charity, and may with one mind and one mouth glorify you; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



TOGETHER

YOUNG ADULT FESTIVAL  
GENERAL CONVENTION 2009

# THE BASICS

## What Is General Convention ?

- ❖ **The primary policy making body of the Episcopal Church.** It usually meets every three years to enact legislation and approve the program and budget of the Episcopal Church. It is a confederation of dioceses represented by individuals.
- ❖ A place for people to **exhibit their wares related to the ministry and business of the church.** The Exhibit Hall will be filled with hundreds of booths selling and giving out both stuff and ideas.
- ❖ An event where a whole variety of people can **demonstrate their viewpoints** in a variety of ways, including flyers, pamphlets, marches, songs, and vigils.
- ❖ A time of **worship** for the church. The possibilities to worship together seem almost limitless. There are large Eucharists that involve everyone as well as small prayer circles.
- ❖ A way to learn about other's experiences through organized **forums and guest speakers.**
- ❖ A chance to **relax**, enjoy good **food**, hear wonderful **music**, **laugh** at ourselves, **talk** with friends, **pray**, and **sing.**

## Who Is General Convention ?

### DEPUTIES & ALTERNATE DEPUTIES

General Convention is called to conduct the business of the Church. The people chosen to do this are called Deputies. Each Diocese (also "Area Missions" and the Convocation of the American Churches in Europe) gets to send no more than four ordained persons (Priests or Deacons) and no more than four Lay Persons. Each Diocese decides how they are chosen. Alternates (in most dioceses) are elected as stand-ins for deputies who cannot be present for all or part of convention.

### BISHOPS

As the Episcopal Church (the word Episcopal means Bishop), General Convention includes Bishops. The "Constitution of the General Convention" says "Each Bishop of this Church having jurisdiction, every Bishop Coadjutor, every Suffragan Bishop, every Assistant Bishop, and every Bishop who by reason of advanced age or bodily infirmity, or who, under an election to an office created by the General Convention, or for reasons of mission strategy determined by action of the General Convention or the House of Bishops, has resigned a jurisdiction, shall have a seat and a vote in the House of Bishops."

### Episcopal Church Women Delegates & Alternates

The Episcopal Church Women hold a meeting at the same time as the business meetings of General Convention. The ECW Triennial was originally created as a parallel to GC at a time when women could not be seated as delegates to GC. There are now all sorts of events connected with the Triennial.

### STAFF

Many people are working at General Convention. Many Episcopal Church Center staff take up residence on-site for part or all of the time. The General Convention Office staff are here before and after. Some diocesan staff, congregational staff and staff of other Church entities are working on site during this time.

## PRESS

There are many stories to tell, and a lot of different media outlets send reporters. You may see newspaper reporters, television crews, even a movie crew. The “official” news service for the Episcopal Church is ENS (Episcopal News Service).

## EXHIBITORS

Almost 200 groups, businesses and church organizations will be on hand to give you free stuff, sell you things, talk to you, show videos, sign you up for mailing lists, and other activities too! You could spend hours in the Exhibit Hall and still not see it all!

## VISITORS

All others who come to General Convention are called Visitors. Some visit for a few hours, some for a day, some for a few days, and some even for the entire time. General Convention is open to anyone to visit, although they must register to get access to most events. Participants at the Young Adult Festival will be classified as visitors.

## Where is General Convention?

General Convention is in Anaheim, California this year. Because it takes so much effort, and so many resources to host an event of this size once every three years, the General Convention site moves around the country. The site for General Convention 2012 will be decided at this General Convention. GC 2003 was in Minneapolis, Minnesota and GC 2006 was in Columbus, Ohio.

## A Brief History of General Convention

When the American Revolution began, the Church of England had many congregations in the American Colonies. During the Revolution, some clergy went to Canada, some returned to England, and some stayed to continue the Anglican Church. After the Revolution, a number of Anglican clergy and lay people decided to organize a new, American church, based on the English model.

Three American Bishops were consecrated, but this wasn't easy since you need three Bishops to consecrate a new Bishop. America started with none. England seemed the best choice for getting someone consecrated Bishop, but English law required Bishops to swear allegiance to the British crown. The American episcopate began in 1784 when the Samuel Seabury of Connecticut was consecrated by Bishops of the Scottish Episcopal Church. By 1787, the Archbishop of Canterbury granted a “non-allegiance clause” so Samuel Provoost of New York and William White of Pennsylvania were consecrated in England. With three Bishops, the American church was able to consecrate new Bishops.

The first General Convention of the Episcopal Church in the United States of America was held at Christ Church, Philadelphia, on July 28, 1789. Its three major achievements were: Unification of Episcopal Dioceses, Authorization of a Book of Common Prayer, and Adoption of a Constitution and Canons

Today, The Episcopal Church is part of a worldwide Anglican Communion. The Anglican Communion has about 76 million members (1.3% of the world population), 900 Bishops and 630 dioceses around the world. The Anglican Communion developed initially in places where England had colonies in the 18th and 19th centuries, but has continued to expand past the colonial boundaries. The Episcopal Church is divided into 9 geographical provinces (usually referred to as Province I, Province II, etc...). There are about 7,000 parishes and missions, 17,000 clergy (Bishops, Priests and Deacons, Active and Retired) and 2.3 million baptized members. General Convention is the one time that representatives of all the varied constituencies of The Episcopal Church gather to discuss the state and future of the Church as a whole.

# HOW DOES IT ALL WORK?

## The “Rules” of the Church

At its most basic level, General Convention exists to make rules that govern the Church. There are three documents that make up what is called “Canon Law”, or the rules of the Church. These are:

**CONSTITUTION** defines structure of church governance; is more difficult to change (takes two General Conventions) is organized by “Articles” (Article IV)

**CANONS** define rules of church; are easier to change (takes one General Convention) are organized by “Title” and “Canons”

**RULES OF ORDER** define process to follow for Business at General Convention; are easier to change

Even though much more happens at General Convention, these “rules” are the basis of how it exists.

## Two Houses

There are two houses at General Convention: the House of Deputies and the House of Bishops. Like the U.S. Congress, both Houses must agree on an action for it to be approved. Unlike the U.S. government, there is no President who can veto or Supreme Court that can strike down actions.

**THE HOUSE OF DEPUTIES** is made up of no more than 8 deputies per diocese (clergy and laity). With 111 dioceses, the House of Deputies is over 800 people! That’s why there are Rules of Order (such as being recognized by the chair to speak at a designated microphone). Without these Rules, it would be hard to get things done. You can watch what goes on, but you cannot speak to the House, and need to be quiet when visiting.

**THE HOUSE OF BISHOPS** is made up of Bishops. If every Bishop were to show up, there would be almost 300 members. At most General Conventions we see around 175 Bishops. One difference between the House of Bishops and the House of Deputies is that the Bishops meet outside of General Convention, but those meetings don’t have the power to make rules for the Church. As with the House of Deputies, the proceedings follow strict rules of order and are generally open to visitors.

## Officers

To keep business in order, someone needs to be in charge. There are many people who work to keep things in order, but only two who have authority to call business to order. In the House of Deputies, it is Mrs. Bonnie Anderson, President of the House of Deputies. In the House of Bishops, it is the Most Rev. Katharine Jefferts Schori, Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church. These two are the presiding officers for their respective houses and make sure all viewpoints are heard and that things keep moving.

# Resolutions

Congress has “Bills” and the General Convention has “Resolutions.” Resolutions begin in different places. Some resolutions make specific recommendations about changing the Constitution or Canons of the church, others ask for the church to take a position on an issue, and some direct other bodies and groups in the church to act in a specific way. Resolutions are coded and numbered based on where they begin and when they are received (for instance, D042 would be the 42nd resolution introduced by deputies).

## WHERE RESOLUTIONS COME FROM

- “A” resolutions – requests included in reports from bodies created by General Convention.
- “B” resolutions – from bishops
- “C” resolutions – from a diocese or province
- “D” resolutions – from deputies

# Committees

There are many Legislative Committees at General Convention, and for good reason. If you tried to talk about everything with everyone, we would never go home, and some people say General Convention is too long as it is. The sole responsibility of most committees is to hold hearings and discuss recommendations regarding each of the resolutions referred to them by the Presiding Officers of the House of Bishops and the House of Deputies. Some committees only have an administrative function.

Although the House of Deputies and the House of Bishops each have their own separate set of Legislative Committees, the cognates (parallel committees in each house) are encouraged to meet together and hold joint hearings on resolutions. Each Legislative Committee must consider every resolution assigned, hold hearings, discuss the proposal with the cognate committee and develop a recommendation to report to their respective House.

## A PLACE WHERE YOUR VOICE CAN BE HEARD

An important part of Committee meetings is that visitors are allowed to speak and be heard. With over 20 different committees, some meeting every day and some more than once in a day, there is plenty of opportunity for you to speak and have your voice heard.

### WHERE TO GO

Locations and times of all Committee meetings are posted on a board near the House of Deputies and Bishops, usually the afternoon before meetings the next day.

### WHEN TO SPEAK

You will need to get to a committee meeting early and sign up, and you usually are limited to speaking for only a couple of minutes. You may not get to speak at all, but this is one place where you can make your voice heard.

### WHAT TO SAY

If you are going to speak at a Committee meeting, there are some important guidelines to keep in mind:

- Don't speak to hear yourself
- Don't speak if someone else has said what you wanted to say
- Speak when you have passion for the issue
- Have prepared remarks
- Don't start until called on

# A LITTLE BIT MORE ABOUT MECHANICS

## Committees of General Convention

- (1) Dispatch of Business
- (2) Certification of Minutes
- (3) Rules of Order
- (4) Constitution
- (5) Canons
- (6) Structure
- (7) Consecration of Bishops
- (8) World Mission
- (9) National and International Concerns
- (10) Social & Urban Affairs
- (11) Church in Small Communities
- (12) Evangelism
- (13) Prayer Book, Liturgy & Church Music
- (14) Ministry
- (15) Education
- (16) Church Pension Fund
- (17) Stewardship and Development
- (18) Ecumenical Relations
- (19) Communications
- (20) Miscellaneous Resolutions
- (21) Privilege & Courtesy
- (22) Committees & Commissions
- (23) Credentials
- (24) Sergeant-at-Arms

## The Simple Process

Every legislative process has four simple steps. Even if you don't know the "ins and outs" of parliamentary procedure or Robert's Rules of Order, you can still follow the process.

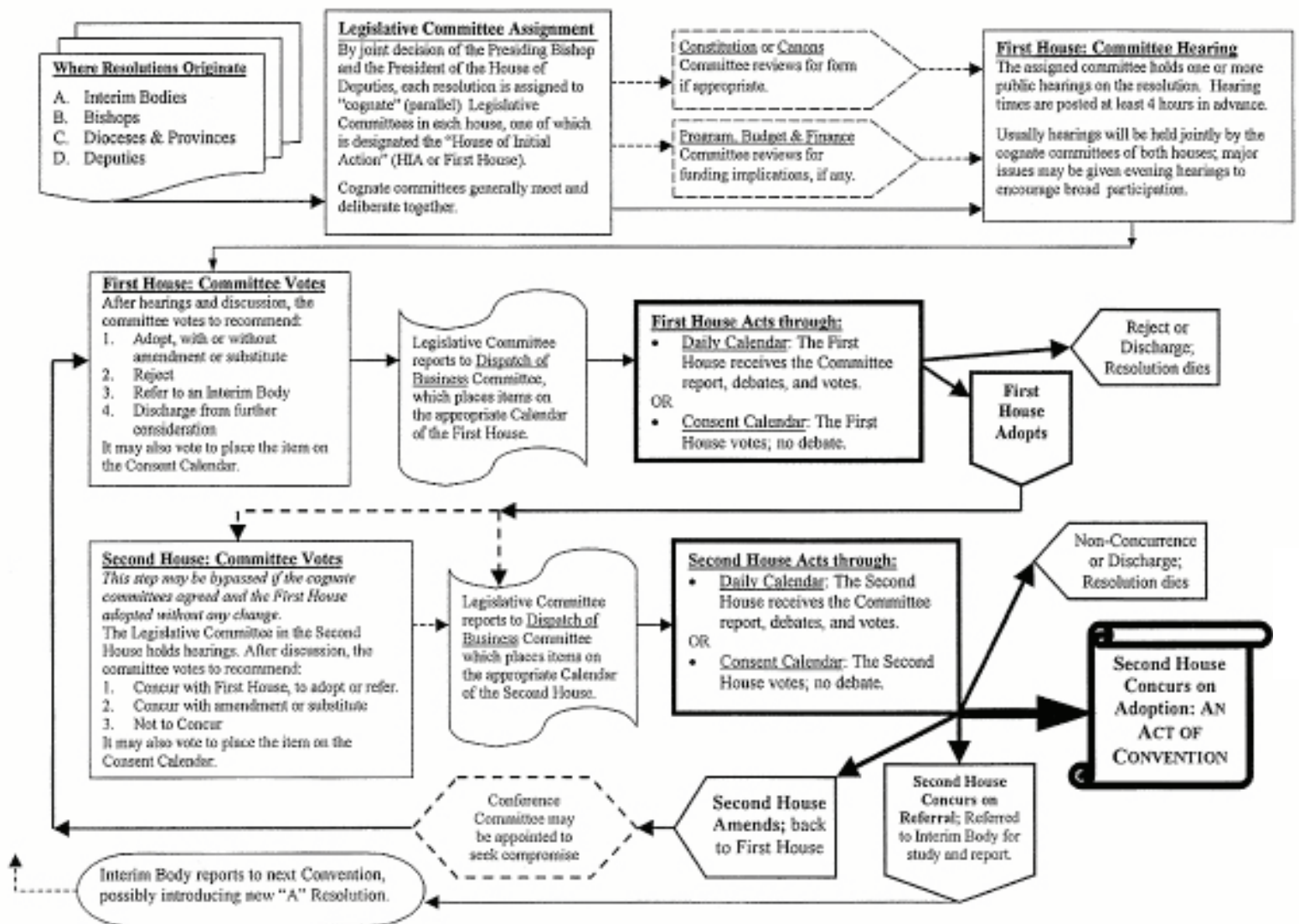
**MOTION** A formal proposal that the assembly take certain action. Usually a "motion" at General Convention is a Resolution, but sometimes there are other motions like "Amend the Motion", "End Debate," or "Send to Committee." You may often hear the motion for "Previous Question" which, if passed, effectively ends debate.

**SECOND** An indication that there is at least one person besides the mover that is interested in seeing the motion come before the meeting. It does not necessarily indicate that the seconder favors the motion, just that they think it is important to talk about it.

**DEBATE** An opportunity for members to talk about what they think of the motion. This usually takes the most time. Some motions don't have discussion, they just go to the last step.

**VOTE** A point comes when a decision is made. Most votes are by majority (more than half the votes cast), and some need a two-thirds vote (at least two-thirds of the votes cast). The votes are tabulated by electronic counters. Sometimes in the House of Deputies there are votes "By Orders", which means that a majority of the deputation of Clergy and a majority of the deputation of Laity must be in favor for a resolution to pass.

## THE GENERAL CONVENTION: LEGISLATIVE PROCESS



## Top 10 Things to Do At General Convention

10. Visit the Exhibit Hall and grab all the free stuff you can.
9. Spend a full hour listening to the debate and discussion on the floor of the House of Deputies.
8. Spend a full hour listening to the debate and discussion on the floor of the House of Bishops.
7. Go to some form of worship service during the Convention.
6. Go to a committee meeting that interests you. Sign up to speak if you have passion about an issue.
5. Pick up and read every newspaper and pamphlet given to you. You may not agree with the contents, but you'll learn a lot.
4. Attend a non-business General Convention event, like a concert or forum.
3. Wear comfortable shoes, because you'll do a lot of walking on hard floors.
2. Write down your thoughts and feelings about everything going on. Take time to reflect on it in the future.
1. Pray that God is present in the process of General Convention.

Wanna know more?

*Visit the General Convention Website:*

[www.episcopalchurch.org/gc2009.htm](http://www.episcopalchurch.org/gc2009.htm)



YOUNG ADULT & CAMPUS MINISTRIES

A Program of the Mission Leadership Center at the Episcopal Church Center

The Reverend Douglas Fenton, *Program Officer* - [dfenton@episcopalchurch.org](mailto:dfenton@episcopalchurch.org)

Jason Sierra, *Associate Program Officer* - [jsierra@episcopalchurch.org](mailto:jsierra@episcopalchurch.org)

TOGETHER  
YOUNG ADULT FESTIVAL  
GENERAL CONVENTION 2009

[www.episcopalchurch.org/youngadults](http://www.episcopalchurch.org/youngadults)