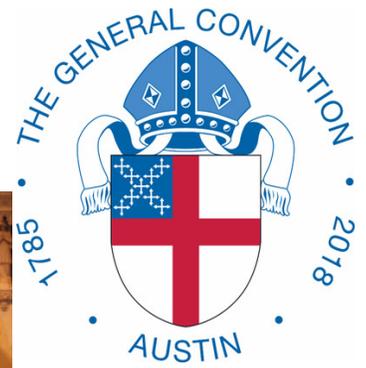
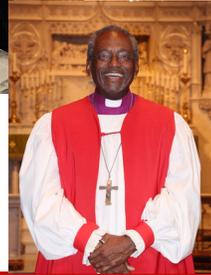
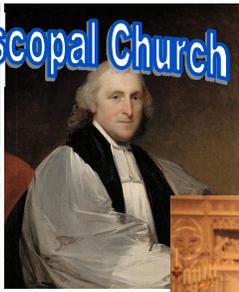


The 79th General Convention of the Episcopal Church



The First General Convention of the Episcopal Church was held in September 1785, with clergy and lay representatives from Delaware, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Virginia. William White was elected the “President” (he was not yet a bishop) and presided. (That’s him above Bp. Michael Curry.) That General Convention authorized the preparation of an American Prayer Book and named itself the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America. As in all things Episcopal, and any Convention, there was lots of drama! The first “General Convention” was boycotted by Seabury and the New Englanders because provision had not been made for a bishop to preside. Since we are studying the Nicene Creed, another dispute pertaining to the American Prayer Book was a part of that first Convention’s agenda. Wanting to maintain a strong expression of the Protestant tradition, the Proposed Prayer Book omitted “...the Athanasian and Nicene Creeds, (and) the ‘descent into hell’ from the Apostles’ Creed...” (p.196, *A History of the American Episcopal Church*, William W. Manross.) 233 years later, below are some of the issues that will be debated at this Convention.

** ***Taken from July 1, 2018 The Living Church***

** **Same-sex marriage:** The bishops of 93 domestic dioceses have approved the trial use of same-sex marriage rites, and same-sex marriages have been solemnized around the country. But the 2015 General Convention resolution that established the rites specified they can be used only with the consent of the local bishop, and eight domestic bishops do not permit same-sex marriages in their dioceses. Proposed resolutions would eliminate the bishop’s veto and start the process of adding the trial rites to the Book of Common Prayer. Proponents say that access to the rites should not depend on a person’s Zip Code. Opponents see the resolutions as another step into wrongful doctrine, and warn of further division.

** **Prayer book revision:** In addition to the issue of whether to add same-sex marriage rites to the Book of Common Prayer, a subcommittee of the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music established in 2015 has been considering the possibility of a comprehensive revision of the 1979 prayer book. The subcommittee offers two alternatives, each with hefty costs. Option 1 is a 12-year process aimed at adopting final revisions to the prayer book at the 2030 General Convention. Each triennium leading to 2030 would be devoted to different phases of the process, including research, drafting, trial use, and approval at two consecutive General Conventions. The subcommittee asks for a budget of \$1.9 million for the 2019-21 triennium alone, and estimates that the total cost would be between \$7 million and \$8 million. Option 2 calls for extensive research for a single triennium, leading toward “an intentional and fuller engagement” with the 1979 prayer book. The effort would include cataloging the texts currently used in bulletins throughout the church; convening focus groups; consulting with other Anglican provinces; and developing resources to help congregations connect with the prayer book. The proposed budget for this option is \$1.2 million, which includes translating the prayer book into Spanish, French, and Haitian Creole.

**** Salary for the president of the House of Deputies:** The PHoD wears multiple hats and has extensive duties under the Constitution and Canons of the church. It has always been an unpaid position, which has become more problematic as the duties of the job have grown over the decades. It has been more than 30 years since a president has tried to hold down a separate job while in office. In 1997, 2000, and 2015, the House of Deputies approved a salary for its president. Each time, the House of Bishops voted against, thereby defeating the proposal. The same thing may well happen again in 2018, as there are no bishops publicly championing the idea, while some are strongly opposed. Many deputies see this as a justice issue, and note that under the current system, only a retiree or a person of means can reasonably hold the position. Some bishops believe the role has increased through “mission creep,” and that the position should be scaled back in responsibility and authority. The proposed budget for 2019-21 includes a placeholder of up to \$900,000 for a president’s salary and benefits. This implies an annual salary of \$200,000 or a bit more, in the same range as the other most-senior executives of the church. The Rev. Gay Clark Jennings has been the deputies’ president for the past six years, and is eligible to run for one more three-year term. She declined to answer when asked if she plans to run again.

**** The Episcopacy:** More than 30 resolutions, many of them seeking minor changes in language, address the election and tenure of bishops. Substantive issues include creating a confidential process to help priests discern whether they are called to the episcopacy before ever applying for a specific opening. Another resolution would create a Board for Episcopal Transitions to work with the existing Office of Pastoral Development in recruiting and training transition consultants, and to gather and analyze data to promote more diversity in the episcopacy.

**** Title IV:** A task force has proposed more than 20 resolutions to revise Title IV, which governs the church’s disciplinary process for deacons, priests, and bishops. Title IV consists of more than 40 densely worded pages in the canons of the church. It is confusing, internally inconsistent, and poorly organized, which results in different approaches to Title IV in different dioceses. Many of the resolutions simply fix ambiguities that resulted from earlier changes. The centerpiece of the task force’s efforts is a website that will be launched at General Convention. “Understanding Title IV” (now in beta testing) is a flexible, sophisticated, interactive site designed to provide information about every step of the often-lengthy process. Other aims of the Title IV resolutions include creating a churchwide database of disciplinary proceedings and case dispositions; streamlining the process by establishing a single appeals court, replacing the provincial courts that now exist; and clarifying various portions of the canon.

**** Israel-Palestine conflicts:** A resolution calls on the existing Corporate Social Responsibility Committee to identify “companies that profit from Israel’s occupation of Palestinian lands or whose products or actions support the infrastructure of the occupation.” The church would divest its holdings in such companies, prohibit further investment, and urge Episcopalians to avoid investing in those companies or buying their wares. A similar resolution failed in 2015.

**** The “Royal Wedding bishop”:** Presiding Bishop Michael Curry’s rousing and provocative sermon at the May 19 wedding of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle received overwhelmingly supportive reviews, tempered by some complaints that the tone was not right for the location or the occasion. There will likely be discussions about whether the church is doing enough, or too much, to leverage the attention being paid to all things Episcopal. Curry will preach at a revival service late Saturday afternoon, July 7, followed by an open barbecue hosted by the Diocese of Texas.