

The 182nd Convention of the Diocese of Kentucky approved a \$1.5 million budget, elected a new slate of diocesan leaders and adopted a host of resolutions, but this annual meeting was not about business as usual, thanks to the bishop and a panel of young adult Episcopalians who cherish their church and want more from it.

Retiring in September, Bishop Ted Gulick focused his annual address on the convention's theme "Generation to Generation" and organized a "Generation to Generation Dialogue" as a plenary session that followed so, he reported, those entrusted with electing a new bishop in June could hear from an under-represented group of Episcopalians, the 20-something "Millennials" and their predecessors, the "Gen-Xers."

Four priests and three lay members participated in the discussion, described later by several convention participants as the central event of the Feb. 26-27 convention at Grace Episcopal Church, Paducah. The young adults were asked by Bishop Ted Gulick to share their views about their Episcopal identity, church tradition and practices, and their vision for The Episcopal Church. For 56 minutes, the deputies and clergy heard what young adults like about their church, what frustrates them and what they would like to see it do differently. (An audio recording of the session has been posted online, and DVDs of the video recording will be available to the churches later.)

As one priest, a Millennial herself, reported from the pulpit the next day, the dialogue was "exciting" and important. Not at all reticent, the panelists energized the convention with their direct, enthusiastic and at times passionately delivered answers. They gave the clergy and deputies much to think about.

According to the panelists' accounts, a picture emerged of the Millennial generation as relational and traditional. They typically want to be personally invited to participate in an activity or organization (no "sign up sheets" in the parish hall for them; lists are missing the personal element), panelists said. If they do show up at the church door, "welcome them and give them something to do," advised the Rev. Canon Amy Coultas, a Gen-Xer who is the youth and young adults missionary at Christ Church Cathedral in Louisville. They are do-ers. Do not assume, however, that they want to do youth ministry; they might prefer to work with the altar guild, suggested the Rev. Hilary Bogert-Winkler, a recently ordained member of the Millennial generation who is the priest associate at Grace Church in Amherst, Mass.

The panelists revealed they like Episcopal tradition. Repeatedly, they mentioned the Book of Common Prayer and the common worship that connects Episcopalians with Anglican churches around the world and across centuries. The Rev. Mitch Bojarski, the new vicar at St. Thomas in Campbellsville who can claim affiliation with both groups, noted his concern that Episcopalians, seeing nondenominational churches' growth, are abandoning traditional Episcopal worship practices as a response to the pressure of declining membership.

Ellie Nolan, a student and peer mentor with the Episcopal campus ministry at the University of Louisville, said she "cherishes" the Church's openness and acceptance of

different people and different views. Benjamin Hart, a student at Murray State University and peer minister in the campus ministry at St. John's Church, noted that he appreciates the way Episcopalians engage scripture in Christian formation classes such as Education for Ministry, where hard questions are welcome and easy answers not given.

Even as they spoke about their frustrations, they revealed a passionate regard for their church community and ministries. The clergy members listed several concerns, including the under funding of young adults ministries, the reliance upon a numbers-based business model for measuring success, and the under use of laity and the over-dependence upon clergy and lay employees.

The Rev. Matt Bradley, rector of St. John's in Murray and a chaplain to Murray State University students, noted that churches "are not developing their members into disciples... They have them looking to the clergy for answers, to provide programs, to start ministries. The impetus should come from the laity." In addition, he noted another problem: expecting that church employees can do multiple full-time jobs. "I am a one-third time campus minister and a two-thirds time rector, and every week I feel like I do a bad job ... because I can't do them fully."

Tellingly, a lay panel member, Jennifer Dulaney, revealed a problem that Coultas later pointed out has been shown in church research studies to be the reason persons under 30 leave the church. While an undergraduate at Western Kentucky University, Dulaney was an active member of Christ Church's campus ministry, serving as a peer minister for two years. The 2009 graduate, however, reported that she now feels alone and misses having a group at church in her age range. Young adults' groups, she said, can become dominated by those who are in their 30's, are married and have children. "I'm not married. I don't have kids. I don't fit in with a college group. ... I just want something where you don't feel all alone."

Other convention highpoints

Although this was the first time (at least in recent years) a series of workshops were offered on the first afternoon of convention, the sessions were well attended and generated after the sessions ended. Sessions addressed a range of topics and issues, their titles largely self-explanatory: "Caring for Our Fragile Earth, Our Island Home"; "Staging the Story: Using Drama in Your Church"; "Charter for Lifelong Formation"; "Living Our Faith: Stewardship in the 21 Century"; "When the Storms of Life O'er Take Us: Preparing for Disasters & Catastrophic Events"; "Voices of Homelessness in Western Kentucky"; "Wellness and Faithful Living"; "Amendments to & Restatements of the Charters of Trustees & Council and the Bishop Dudley Memorial"; "The Poetry of George Herbert"; and "Transforming Lives Through Outreach Projects."

Following Eucharist and the opening business session, the convention participants and guests were invited to a reception at the Seamen's Institute, where they were able to learn about the ministry for mariners as well as see their training facilities, which included some

hands-on, simulated navigation training for inland waterways. The simulation was so realistic that some reported feeling a bit queasy afterwards. Across the street, the convention guests took center stage, literally, for dinner at the Four Rivers Carson Center, Paducah's stunning performing arts center. During the dinner, Grace Church member Richard Paxton, soon to become a deacon, took the opportunity to inform the soon-to-retire bishop that he has been made a "Duke of Paducah" with its "rights and responsibilities."

The convention was also marked by another bittersweet moment when Bishop Ted Gulick recognized the long service of Dr. Maggie Miller, who has served as his parliamentarian at conventions throughout his episcopacy. The canons require the chancellor to serve as parliamentarian at the electing convention, so this was her final convention seeing that the rules of order were followed, he announced. She and the Rev. Libby Wade, as the convention host, were both given diocesan crosses.

Convention business addressed

In a matter of hours, no more than four, following Saturday's dialogue with the young adults, 71 adult deputies, five youth deputies and 42 clergy members present completed the convention's business agenda. They elected a slate of officers, heard reports from the treasurer and other officers, approved the 2010 budget and acted on more than 10 resolutions, a higher number than usual.

Eight of the resolutions that were passed, some after first being amended, are based on actions taken by last summer's General Convention. Most but not all were submitted by the diocese's General Convention deputation and are similar to General Convention resolutions. The resolutions involve restricting bottled water, energy and water conservation; the charter for lifelong Christian formation; recommitment to anti-racism; establishing a Sunday during Lent as Episcopal Relief and Development Sunday; supporting equitable education for children; "The 80-Cent Solution" campaign to support world missionaries; tithing as a minimum standard of giving; and health care coverage for all. [The diocesan convention, however, rejected a second part to the health care resolution, which supported General Convention Resolution D048's call for single-payer universal-care coverage.]. Convention also approved special rules of order for the June 5 electing convention, and it reaffirmed its commitment to the Millennium Development Goals campaign as a mission priority through 2015.

Looking ahead to the 2012 General Convention, the diocesan leaders established April 16 as a day of local commemoration for Sister Emily Cooper and "all forgotten children" and resolved to seek their inclusion in *Holy Women, Holy Men* (formerly *Lesser Feasts and Fasts*). Cooper was an Episcopal deaconess appointed in 1880 to head the new Home of the Innocents, a Louisville home for neglected, unwanted, sick and abused children founded by the diocese that is still serving the community and has been designated a Jubilee Center.

Sixteen clergy and lay members were elected to diocesan offices, and 36 appointments by the bishop were announced. The names of the newly elected may be found on online.

Convention also adopted a 2010 budget totaling \$1,516,863, about \$21,000 higher than the \$1.4 million budget approved in 2009. Congregational pledging increased three percent, making up for the three percent decline in pledges last year.

Next year's convention will be held at St. Matthew's Episcopal Church in Louisville and St. Alban's, Fern Creek, the year after that.