

WHAT IS GENERAL CONVENTION AND HOW DOES IT WORK?



General Convention is the governing body of the Church. Each diocese (geographical area) of the Episcopal Church appoints up to four clergy and four lay leaders as deputies to attend the General Convention. Just as the governing body of the United States is comprised of the House of Representatives and the Senate, the General Convention is comprised of two houses: the House of Bishops and the **House of Deputies**. They meet and act separately, and both houses must concur to adopt legislation.

When a “vote by orders” is invoked in the House of Deputies, legislation cannot pass unless it receives a majority of lay votes and

a majority of clergy votes on the same ballot. Note that this means that controversial legislation cannot be adopted by General Convention unless each order — lay, clergy, and bishop— votes for it. Ours is a remarkably democratic structure!

The House of Deputies has over 900 members (including alternates), and at each General Convention, the House of Deputies elects a president to serve a three-year term. The House of Deputies meets once every three years, at General Convention.

The 77th General Convention will meet for a nine-day legislative session from July 5-12, 2012 in Indianapolis, Indiana. This is how our Church comes together to seek God’s will in a planned, informed and prayerful way.

Responsibilities for bishops and deputies at the 77th General Convention will include:

- Adopting legislation of concern to the Church
- Amending the Book of Common Prayer, the Constitution, or the Canons of the Church
- Adopting a triennial budget for The Episcopal Church
- Electing candidates to offices and committees for the coming triennium

To see a short PowerPoint introduction to the General Convention, click [here](#).

What is the “Blue Book?”

The Blue Book is the compilation of reports from all Committees, Commissions, Agencies, and Boards of The Episcopal Church prepared in anticipation of General Convention. Many of these “CCAB’s” prepare resolutions. These resolutions are referred to a legislative committee during General Convention. The committee may kill the resolution or send it to the floor with or without amendment. So, what’s in the Blue Book is not always what is voted on by the deputies,

but the Blue Book nevertheless gives a very good idea of what will be considered.

The Blue Book is 753 pages long, but, fortunately, it has a table of contents, and you can read only areas of concern to you. You can download a pdf. version (for free) at: <http://generalconvention.org/gc/prepare>. Note that, mercifully, you can click on an entry in the Table of Contents, and you will be taken to that page.

Is the Blue Book blue? Not usually! In good church fashion, we started calling it the “blue” book when it was actually blue, and the name stuck even though the color has changed over the years. (And we wonder why we have trouble changing the Prayer Book!?) This year, the color of the printed book is salmon. The carefully thought out theological reasoning behind this decision is given by the Secretary of Convention: “The book is salmon this year, for no better reason than I like it.” (*Blue Book, introductory letter*).

What Important Issues Will be Addressed at General Convention?

Importance may be in the eye of the beholder, but here are some issues that have generated widespread interest. For each issue, we have given a page number in the Blue Book that contains the report of the CCAB regarding the issue as well as other resources if appropriate.

1. Structure of the Church

Many dioceses, including ours (see below), have considered or adopted resolutions relating to the structure of the church, length and frequency of General Convention, amount of diocesan apportionments, and office of the Presiding Bishop.

- a. Report of the Standing Commission on the Structure of the Church, p. 533. See especially:
 - i. Resolution A090: Endorse the Principle of Subsidiarity, p. 536
 - ii. Resolution A091: Reduce Diocesan Apportionments, 538
 - iii. Resolution A092: Length of the 78th General Convention, p. 538
 - iv. Resolution A100: Coordinate Church Reform and Restructuring, p. 540
 - v. Role and Term of the Presiding Bishop, 545
- b. WNC Resolution passed at Convention 2011 and submitted to GC (this resolution has been passed by numerous dioceses):

ON STRUCTURAL REFORM 77TH GENERAL CONVENTION

Resolved, the Executive Council of the Diocese of Western North Carolina directs that the following resolution be filed with the Secretary of the General Convention for consideration by the 77th General Convention of The Episcopal Church:

Resolved, the House of _____ concurring, there shall be a Special Commission on Missional Structure and Strategy, the composition of which shall be at the discretion of the Presiding Bishop and the President

of the House of Deputies and the members of which shall be appointed jointly thereby not later than thirty days following the adjournment of this 77th General Convention. The Special Commission shall be charged with presenting a plan to the Church for reforming its structures, governance, administration, and staff to facilitate this Church's faithful engagement in Christ's mission to proclaim good news to the poor, release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, freedom to the oppressed, and the acceptable year of the Lord (Lk. 4:18) in a way that maximizes the resources available for that mission at all levels of this Church.

Resolved, the Special Commission shall endeavor to issue its report and recommendations along with resolutions necessary to implement them, including proposed amendments to the Constitution and Canons of this Church, so that they might be considered by a special General Convention prior to the convening of the 78th General Convention in 2015, but in any event, not later than February 1, 2015.

Resolved, the General Convention requests the Joint Standing Committee on Program, Budget, and Finance to consider a budget allocation of \$100,000 for the implementation of this resolution.

2. **Budget of The Episcopal Church for the Next Triennium**

The budget has been controversial due to cuts in areas many consider important and some apparent confusion about who is making budget decisions. Go to <http://generalconvention.org/gc/prepare> to download the following documents:

- a. Executive Council's Narrative to Accompany the Draft Proposed Budget
- b. Executive Council's Draft Proposed Budget for 2013 - 2015
- c. Feedback on Proposed 2013-2015 Budget

3. **Liturgies for Blessing of Same-Gender Relationships**

- a. Report of the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music, p. 162
 - i. Resources for Blessing Same-Gender Relationships, p. 166
 - ii. Resolution A049: Authorize Liturgical Resources for Blessing Same-Gender Relationships, p. 168
 - iii. Resolution A050: Create Task Force on the Study of Marriage, p. 168
 - iv. Appendices
 1. I Will Bless You and You Will Be a Blessing, p. 184
 2. Faith, Hope, and Love: Theological Resources for Blessing Same-Gender Relationships, p. 191
 3. The Church's Canon Law and the Laws of the States, p. 217
 4. Hearing, Seeing, and Declaring New Things: Preparing Same-Gender Couples for a Liturgy of Blessing, p. 222
 5. The Witnessing and Blessing of a Lifelong Covenant: Liturgical Resources for Blessing Same-Gender Relationships, p. 239
 6. Discussion Guide to *I will Bless you, and You will be a Blessing*, p. 250
 7. A Review of General Convention Legislation, p. 275

8. Glossary, p. 279

4. Implementation of the Denominational Health Plan

The Denominational Health Plan is scheduled to go into effect January 1, 2013. It will require all employees of the Church (including laity) who work 30 or more hours a week to be provided health insurance through the Medical Trust. Under the “parity” provisions, whatever insurance is offered to the clergy must also be offered to the laity. (See the diocesan website for more information on the DHP and WNC policies related to it. (Click [here](#) to read “Understanding the DHP”.)

A number of dioceses have passed resolutions to be sent to GC calling for a actions ranging from further study, delay, modification, or removal of key provisions. (Click [here](#) to read an article on resolutions related to the DHP).

The DHP is not addressed in the Blue Book, but these resolutions will almost certainly be addressed at the Convention.

5. The Anglican Covenant

The proposed Anglican Covenant arose out of the controversy caused by the election of Bp. Robinson of New Hampshire. It proposes a structure whereby each member of the Anglican Communion would agree not to take controversial positions without the permission of the rest of the Communion.

- a. 77th General Convention Proposed Resolutions Approved by Executive Council: Resolution A126: Consideration of the Anglican Covenant (“*Resolved*, That The Episcopal Church is unable to adopt the Anglican Covenant in its present form.”) p. 590
- b. Executive Council D020 Task Force on the Response to the Anglican Covenant, p. 633
- c. Anglican Covenant Final Study Guide [[Link](#)]
- d. Anglican Covenant Province IV 6.9.11 PowerPoint Presentation (presenting the case against the Covenant) [[Link](#)]
- e. WNC Annual Convention 2011 adopted the following resolution:

ANGLICAN COVENANT RESOLUTION

BE IT RESOLVED, that this 90th Annual Convention of the Diocese of Western North Carolina requests that the Executive Council of the Episcopal Church express our desire, to continue discussions with our brothers and sisters of the Anglican Communion regarding the unity of the Communion; and

BE IT FUTHER RESOLVED, that this 90th Annual Convention of the Diocese of Western North Carolina requests that the Executive Council of the Episcopal Church express our desire that, while withholding our affirmation of the Covenant in its present form, any future Covenant presented to Episcopal Church needs to more fully represent the

wholeness of the Church with regard to the voice and role of the clergy and laity in the governance of the Church.

Who are the Deputies from Western North Carolina?

Clergy	Lay
The Rev. Karla Woggon (Chair), rector, The Episcopal Church of The Ascension, Hickory	Ms. Diane Mance, St. Matthias, Asheville
The Rev. Mike Cogsdale, rector, St. James, Lenoir	Mrs. Matilda Kistler, Grace, Morganton
The Rev. Cn. Jim Pritchett, Canon to the Ordinary, Diocese of WNC	Ms. Sally Spiegel, Trinity, Asheville
The Rev. Joel Hafer, rector, St. James, Hendersonville	Ms. Jane Schronce, St. Luke's, Lincolnton
The Rev. Rob Lundquist (1 st Alternate), rector, Holy Family, Mills River	Mr. David Trask (1 st Alternate), Holy Communion, Glendale Springs

How May Your Voice be Heard?

The Role of Deputies:

Deputies vote their conscience for the good of the Church. They cannot be instructed to vote one way or another, for to do so would preclude godly debate and preempt the work of the Holy Spirit. Deputies are expected to serve on committees, if appointed, to attend forums and hearings, to read the reports to the Church from its commissions, committees, agencies, and boards, to listen to, and if so moved, to respond to resolutions on the floor of the house.

*Adapted from an introduction to the 2009 General Convention
prepared by the Rev. Dr. Gregory S. Straub,
Executive Officer and Secretary of General Convention*

Nevertheless, the deputation from Western North Carolina would like to prayerfully consider your comments and reflections on the work before the General Convention.

To send your comments on any issue before General Convention, send an email to: WNCDeputyGC2012@gmail.com. The deputation appreciates your concern and faithfulness. We also request your prayers for the Convention and for us. Thank you!