



E-DOLA

E-News from the Diocese of Louisiana

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Final Note About General Convention

by Ed Starns

Kay and I returned to Baton Rouge late Saturday night. Sunday morning I reacquainted myself with the “green” of Louisiana. While the weather is quite good in California, it is very dry and, for the most part, brown. I like green!

In our last update to you as of mid-morning last Wednesday, we were awaiting the budget report from the Program Budget and Finance Committee. They brought forth a budget that is in balance but reduces church-wide spending by some 23 million dollars. The budget was presented in the Wednesday afternoon session with debate and passage during the Thursday morning session.

For the upcoming triennium, revenues are forecast at \$141.3 million as compared with a projected \$164.9 million in the current triennium. A major area of change is a reduction in Diocesan commitments of \$11 million from \$90.5 million to \$79.2 million. Much of this reduction is due to the increased exemption (going from 100K to 120K) and a reduction in the asking percentage from 21% to 20% to 19% in the years 2010 through 2012. This may still prove an optimistic assumption as to revenues from the various dioceses. Time will tell.

Total expenses for the coming triennium were budgeted at \$140.8 million as compared to a projected amount of \$163.9 million for the current period. Entire programs were cut and this should lead to a reduction in the workforce at 815 (the Church’s national office). One category of expenses was considerably increased from the draft budget circulated several months ago and that item was for the Title IV legal assistance. The original draft budgeted \$1,800,000. The approved budget is \$4,000,000. Title IV and legal assistance to dioceses relates to property litigation and disciplinary situations.

During the budget hearings, there were numerous calls for amendments to various areas of the expense budget. All were defeated. After the budget was passed, prayers were offered “for those who bear great burdens for what we have chosen not to do in this budget.”

One of the interesting proposals in the budget is a two day reduction in the next General Convention. It will be interesting to see how that proposal fares as it seems to me that those who “drive the train” really like “driving the train”.

On Wednesday, the House of Deputies concurred with the House of Bishops and approved a Denominational Health Plan. This would mandate participation in a church-wide health plan with a key feature being parity between the contribution rates for lay and clergy employees. The individual diocese would be responsible for determining the contribution rates for its member organizations. Dioceses also have the option of excluding schools from such coverage. The goal of this undertaking is to gather under one umbrella a larger group to more effectively bargain for more favorable rate structures. While the plan passed the HoD with little opposition, there is apprehension as to its implementation and ultimate cost. Given that this is a fundamental change in the way insurance is administered and not now knowing how the “national plan” is going to play out, a three-year phase is allowed and must be completed by December 31, 2012.

Resolution C056 came to the HoD from the HoB in substitute form. There was considerable debate, but the HoD vote to approve was much the same as the approval of D025. C056 authorizes the collection and development of theological and liturgical resources for the blessings of same gender relationships with a report thereon to the next General Convention.

The vote in the HoD by division was clergy 74/34 and lay 78/30. Your deputation was no in both orders. It does not authorize such blessings but does state that particularly where such relationship are legal, Bishops...“may provide generous pastoral response to meet the needs of the members of this church.”

The HoD also passed resolution C023 calling on all Episcopalians to work for the repeal of “Defense of Marriage” statutes. These are, in general, statutes that define marriage as between a man and woman. Again, the HoD voted its passage. The HoB turned it back by referring it to a standing committee. With time running out on Friday, the HoD had no choice but to concur.

Resolution C061 dealing with equal access to the discernment process came to the House of Deputies in amended form. The original language stated no person shall be denied access...“because of race, color, ethnic origin, national origin, sex, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, disabilities or age except as otherwise provided by these Canons.” The HOB amended language to read (in effect) that all baptized persons have equal access but the HOD felt that the specific identifications were preferable to the word “all” so the amended language (and resolution) was rejected.

In somewhat of a surprise the HoB did not approve Resolution A052 which would eliminate the voting rights for those in the HoB without jurisdiction (retired Bishops). By not approving this, the process starts over with a first reading in 2012 and if passed, would then require approval of both Houses in 2015. So for now, retired Bishops have both voice and vote.

The 2009 General Convention featured a decidedly more liberal HoD. Voices heard in the past are no longer with us and frankly, even if I do not agree with them on all issues, I think the HoD is a more vigorous body with those voices present. As one deputy put it...“You can’t fly an airplane with just a left wing, you need a right one too.”

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AROUND THE DIOCESE

Notes from India

ECSLA Executive Director Nell Bolton is in India for several weeks working an interfaith peacebuilding project. She checks in when she can, and these are her most recent thoughts.

Greetings from Bhubaneswar, Orissa, India, where a depression (precursor to a cyclone, the Asian version of a hurricane!) is brewing off the coast and where the local team and I have been going through intense analysis of the conflict in Kandhamal district of Orissa state.

Although it is a complex situation involving resource control/ethnicity/religion/tradition/constitutional rights/identity-based politics and other factors, I am struck by the way our experiences of the past four years find some echoes here.

For example: the organization is just now able to provide some temporary housing to those who lost their homes in the violence last August; in the meantime, government compensation programs are slow to make payments and won't provide adequate funds for the necessary rebuilding. And there are a good number of families whose damaged or destroyed houses were not included in the original assessment, and therefore haven't been made eligible for compensation. Sound familiar?

Concurrently there are fears, allegations, and in some cases evidence of land-grabs. Of course, there are differences too: in an effort to reach across religious lines this organization is trying to rebuild not only the riot-destroyed homes of Christians, but also the homes of several Hindu families that were destroyed by rampaging elephants! Not a common occurrence in Louisiana, although perhaps the nutria may one day take over.

On a far more serious note, we still have much work to do to design a set of interventions that will minimize current tensions and build sustainable peace for the long-term, and feel a great deal of responsibility to make a significant project investment while also guarding against a whole set of risks and dangers. Please send good energy our way!

Did you get your copy of ChurchWork?

Please contact Rebecca Pitre to have one sent to you.
rpitre@edola.org

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Also, please know there was much other work done besides those actions on "hot button" issues. Our Church is very active in many fields of mission here and abroad – directly and through its agencies, such as Episcopal Relief and Development. If you do not know about "Nets for Life," I would urge you to either visit their website or give them a call for information – that program is a life saver.

Louisiana and its ongoing recovery is in the heart of the Church. They care for the work being done in the Diocese and continue to support it through volunteer work and financial assistance. As Convention ended, a young lady from one of the New York Dioceses came up and asked for some Mardi Gras beads (yes, we had plenty!) and our buttons proclaiming 'I found Ubuntu in New Orleans' (Ubuntu, the theme of Convention, means "I in you and you in me) because they had a Youth Team leaving for New Orleans soon. They come, they want to come, we need them to come!

In closing, my thanks to our Deputation for the hard work done in a spirit of collegial fellowship, friendship and unity. If you have the opportunity, please thank them for a job well done. They represented you well.



photo by Manon Prizgintas

The congregation sings our National Anthem at Trinity's 9th Independent Day Music Festival in New Orleans on Sunday, June 28th.

PRAYER REQUEST

This Friday, July 24th, on the Feast of St. James the Apostle, Bishop Herbert A. Donovan of Arkansas will ordain The Rev'd Sean A. Wallace to the Sacred Order of Priests.

The ceremony will take place in the Chapel of the Good Shepherd at the General Theological Seminary in New York City.

After his ordination, Fr. Wallace (pictured below) will stay in New York to work on his Master of Sacred Theology degree and will serve as an assistant priest at Church of the Resurrection in Manhattan.



HOUSE PARTY!



The Clergy House Party is July 27 – 29 at SECC and there are only 10 people signed up!

Bring your family and relax!

Visit solepisc.org to register.

AROUND THE DIOCESE

Archbishop Diopka Donors

Thank you once again to the generous folks below for helping out with Archbishop Diopka's visit.

Hospitality

- The Rt. Rev'd and Mrs. Charles Jenkins
- The Rev'd Dr. Jean Meade, her husband Mr. Louis Koerner and Mt. Olivet Church
- The Rev'd Lonell Wright and All Souls Church
- The Rev'd Jerry Kramer and Church of the Annunciation
- The Rev'd Bill Terry and St. Anna's Church
- The Rev'd and Mrs. A. J. Heine
- Deacon and Mrs. Michael Hackett
- Deacon Debbie Scalia and St. Martin's School
- Mrs. Harriet Murrell
- Mr. Joe Wallace
- Jean and Sarah Montes

Gifts to the Bishop's Fund to Assist with Expenses

- Annunciation Church, New Orleans
- Holy Communion Church, Plaquemine
- Christ Church Cathedral, New Orleans
- St. Anna's, New Orleans
- Grace Church, Hammond
- Christ Church, Covington
- Trinity Church, Morgan City
- St. Paul's Holy Trinity, New Roads
- Trinity Church, Baton Rouge
- Grace Church, St. Francisville
- St. Luke's Church, Baton Rouge
- The Rev'd & Mrs. Howard W. Bushey
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Funeral Celebrates Life of Influence

Roger Ward, the Outreach Director of Trinity Church, New Orleans for nearly twenty years, died on Friday, July 17th.

The funeral on Monday, July 20th celebrated the significant influence of his life and ministry to the social fabric of New Orleans.

Writes Bruce Nolan of the *Times-Picayune*:

Dr. Ward spent 18 years at Trinity Episcopal Church, where he developed programs to help that congregation reach out to the poor and marginalize.

He was a founder of the Jeremiah Group, a citywide, faith-based coalition dedicated to community reform.

And at Trinity, he was instrumental in developing anti-racism programs, as well as efforts to provide education and venture capital loans to the church's neighbors in the St. Thomas neighborhood and elsewhere.

Our prayers are with his wife, Gayle, his children and stepchildren and the rest of his family.



photo by Liz Condo/The Advocate

The Advocate just ran a wonderful story on William Mabiior, a Sudanese 'Lost Boy' who has found a spiritual home at Church of the Holy Spirit. Here, he is seen sharing the peace with interim rector, Fr. Flip Bushey. Click [here](#) to read the article and look for a piece on William in the fall issue of *ChurchWork*.

Gaudet Scholarships Awarded

Continuing its pledge to work for the benefit of needy children, and in keeping with the legacy of Frances Joseph Gaudet, the Board of Episcopal Community Services is pleased to announce the awarding of 92 Frances Gaudet Scholarships totaling \$110,000 to students at the following schools for the 2009-2010 academic year:

Christ Episcopal, Covington
Episcopal, Baton Rouge
St. Andrew's, New Orleans
St. George's, New Orleans
St. James, Baton Rouge

St. Luke's, Baton Rouge
St. Martin's, Metairie
St. Matthew's, Houma
St. Paul's, New Orleans
Trinity, New Orleans

The purpose of the ECS Gaudet Scholarship Program is to advance the education of Black African American students through need-based partial scholarships to attend primary and secondary schools that offer rigorous curricula in preparation for entry to and completion of college. Congratulations!