187th Diocesan Convention:

"Called Together in God, Love, & Joy to Worship, Serve, & Play"

Deacon Kelley Hudlow, Communications Coordinator

On February 9-10, the 187th Convention of the Diocese of Alabama gathered in Decatur, Alabama. Decatur is a city that spans Morgan and Limestone Counties in the Tennessee Valley Convocation of the diocese. Decatur is located in Northern Alabama on the banks of Wheeler Lake, along the Tennessee River. Workshops and caucus elections were held at the DoubleTree Hotel, while the business sessions and Gala, featuring food from Big Bob Gibson's Bar-B-Q, were held at the Ingalls Harbor Pavilion on the river.

The convention was hosted by St. John's Episcopal Church of Decatur. St. John's was founded in 1890 in "New Decatur." Construction of the church was completed in 1893. While the church is in its original location, in the 1940's the building was physically turned to face east. St. John's is part of the "North Alabama Hallelujah Trail of Sacred Places," a driving tour of 32 churches that are at least 100 years old, stand on their original sites, still hold services and are accessible to the public. For more information, visit www.northalabama.org/trails/hallelujah.

The theme of the convention was "Called Together," and was the second year of a three year cycle based on Presiding Bishop Michael Curry's three foundations of the Jesus Movement. This year, the convention was invited to consider how we are called together in the Church's mission of reconciliation.

Delegates were invited to arrive a day early to attend "Seeing the Face of God in Each Other" a day-long interactive workshop that provides an insightful look into the causes and effects of racism. It provides practical ways to combat unconscious bias and ways to work to see the face of God in each other, regardless of race, creed or color. This workshop is facilitated by Deacons Carolyn Foster and Tom Osborne, co-chairs Commission on Race Relations. The work of this training, and the requirement for all ordained persons, professional staff, those elected or appointed to positions of leadership on vestries, committees, commissions, and boards to complete this training was renewed at the previous convention.

Day One

Friday morning, delegates were invited to attend workshops on a variety of topics, including starting a church garden, ACS REALM database, the companion relationship with the Diocese of the Virgin Islands, stewardship, Sawyerville, Special Session, and spiritual direction. Following these workshops, hearings were held on the six resolutions that were pre-filed for consideration at the convention.

Following these hearings, clergy and delegates were invited to the Princess Theatre in downtown Decatur. The Princess began in 1887 as a livery stable. She was transformed into a silent film and vaudeville playhouse in 1919, and in 1941 was renovated in the art deco style that remains today. The Princess was again transformed to host the clergy and delegates to celebrate the opening Holy Eucharist. Music was provided by Foster Bailey, organist at St. John's, with the offertory anthem sung by the Choir of St. John's. Bishop Sloan was the celebrant. The Venerable Marti Holmes was the Gospeler. The Youth Department delegates, Will Hamlett and Cricket Powell, served as lectors, and June Howard Barr led the Prayers of the People. The flowers were given to the glory of God and in thanksgiving for the ministry of all the people of the diocese by the people of St. John's, and the offering was designated for the companion Diocese of the Virgin Islands.

The Rev. Evan Garner, rector of St. John's, preached on the story of Blind Bartimaeus found in Mark 10:42-52.



Reflecting on the Gospel and the theme of reconciliation, Garner preached

> Something happens inside of us when we hear Jesus' call. And something else happens inside of us when we hear him call those people who, in our judgment, don't belong in his company. No one likes the Bartimaeus of our day. No one wants the important work of the church to have to stop and turn aside to address the cries of one blind beggar, one angry protestor, one radical diocese, one cause-happy parishioner or rector or bishop. But the call that Jesus issues to us is the same call that he speaks to them. None of us is called because of who she is but because of who Jesus is and because of who God is. God is the one who loves us with no regard for who we are or what we think or how we act. That is the gospel of Jesus Christ. That is the nature of his call. And, when we hear it, spoken both to us and to those whom we find most threatening, we discover that, in Christ, covered by God's unconditional love, we are all one.

The first business session began at 4 p.m. on Friday, February 9, at the Ingalls Harbor Pavilion, with song and prayer. We were welcomed by Squee Bailey, of St. John's Decatur, and Melinda Dunn, a member of St. John's Decatur and President of Decatur Morgan County Tourism. The session began with many introductions of those seated at the dais with Bishop Sloan — the Rev. John Mark Ford, diocesan Secretary; Phyllis Hall, diocesan Treasurer; the Rev. Candice Burk Frazer; appointed Chair Dispatch of Business; and Jim Hancock, Chancellor and appointed parliamentarian. With 68 parishes and 107 canonical priests present, Bishop Sloan declared a quorum and that convention was open for business.

Bishop Sloan introduced diocesan staff and recognized Diocesan Council members, members of the Standing Committee, non-canonical licensed clergy present, and delegates from the Youth Department — Cricket Powell and Will Hamlet. Those currently in formation for ordination were also introduced. Polly Robb, middler at Sewanee and member of the Board of Trustees, spoke about the variety of programs at Sewanee and the "Stronger Truer Sewanee Campaign" that will allow the School of Theology to return to its original location on central campus in renovated space and to grow its financial assistance to seminarians. For more information, please visit http://www.sewanee.edu/stronger-truer/, or Danielle Dunbar, ddunbar@dioala.org.

Bishop Sloan designated four worshipping communities, each allowed one delegate and alternate: St. Dunstan's Auburn, The Abbey Birmingham, Christ the Redeemer Montgomery, and St. Martin's in the Pines Birmingham. Sloan also recognized the campus ministries,

also allowed one delegate: Birmingham Episcopal Campus Ministries (Trinity Commons), Canterbury Chapel Tuscaloosa, UNA Campus Ministries Florence, St. Dunstan's Auburn, and Jacksonville State. Bishop Sloan introduced the deans of the convocations, and invited the deans to introduce new clergy in their convocation.

Keynote Address

Bishop Sloan introduced the keynote speaker, the Rt. Rev. Robert C. Wright, the 10th Bishop of the Diocese of Atlanta. Bishop Wright's remarks centered on the familiar invitation from Ephesians 5:2, "Walk in love as Christ loved us and gave himself for us an offering and sacrifice to God." He reminded the gathering that when this invitation is given, things start happening — people start walking, reaching for their offering, singing the anthem, and preparing the altar for Holy Communion. He stated "walking in love, which means practically, taking up the ministry of reconciliation as individuals and collectively." Bishop Wright pointed to the many ways that we are sent to walk in love — to places of division in politics, to difficult places that Jesus sends us, to people of different faiths, to young people, even to generous giving in gratitude. Bishop Wright reminded us that we should be encouraged in these times of division, as they are a "wonderful precondition for our light to shine."

To hearten us to walk in love, Bishop Wright reminds us that the love at the center of the Jesus Movement is not a syrupy sentiment, but instead is "the most durable substance in the universe." He described walking in God's durable love:

> To walk in love is to be surrounded by God's love. To walk in love is to be in something that has no bottom, something infinite. So encompassing, so elastic is God's love that even when we fall — we don't break, we bounce. Even when our days are finished on earth, God's love is forever and ever and ever and forever and ever. Flip to the back of the Bible, I double-dog dare you. Hate and division lose. Love Wins. In God's love, there is no lack of love. Why is all of that important? I'm glad you asked. If you and I are immersed in a love that has no borders, limitations, or litmus tests, then you and I have all that we need to go to the places that appear to be loveless for Christ's sake. Remember Paul said walk, take the show on the road. Remember, with all due respect my brothers and sisters, that Jesus never said "wait and welcome," Jesus said, "go and make."

Day 2

The second business session began with the ratification of the caucus elections of representatives to Diocesan Council, followed by the Rev. Deborah Leighton, Canon at the Cathedral Church of the Advent, who presented the council report. Phyllis Hall, Diocesan Treasurer, presented on the budgets for the diocese and Camp McDowell. Following this presentation, all budgets (Resolutions 1-2) were approved by convention.

Bishop Sloan addressed the convention. Following the Bishop's address, the convention approved the chairs of the Departments, Commissions, and Agencies of the Diocese (http://bit.ly/2BqCTZY). The Convention also approved the Nominations from the Chair, which include positions such as the chancellor, treasurer, secretary, and Commission on Ministry (http://bit.ly/2BWsAh3). Bishop Sloan thanked Jim Hancock for his service as Chancellor and congratulated Rip Britton, who was elected to replace him. As the Convention adjourned for lunch, the clergy spouses were invited to Whisk'd Cafe for the Clergy Spouse Luncheon.

As Convention resumed, the youth attending the Lock-in at St. John's energized the gathering through dance for the final business session. The final session centered on the election of clergy and lay representatives to the Standing Committee and the Disciplinary Board, as well as introduction and discussion of proposed resolutions. Resolutions 5 and 6 were introduced and voted on without discussion. Both resolutions called for changes to the diocesan canons and were approved by more than 75% in both Orders.

Resolution 4 proposed a change to the canons that allowed deacons a representative vote at the convention, with one voting representative for every seven deacons. The proposed resolution would allow each deacon a vote. After the resolution was introduced, a motion to amend the resolution was made and passed. After brief discussion from the floor, the resolution, as amended, was voted on by orders and was approved by more than 75% in both Orders.

Prior to the closing worship, Mary Yancey, Chair of the Department of Camp McDowell, was invited to address the convention about the search process for the next executive director. Yancey thanked the Rev. Mark Johnston for his service as executive director and thanked those that served on the search committee. She then introduced the next executive director of Camp McDowell, John Campagna, who gave the invitation for the 188th Convention of the Diocese of Alabama to gather at Camp McDowell February 8-10, 2019.

Special thanks to the clergy and people of St. John's Decatur, the staff of the DoubleTree Hotel, the Princess Theatre, and the Ingalls Harbor Pavilion. Also special thanks to John Hoerner, Gene Lawson, Chris Allison, McKee Sloan, the Rev. Rob Morpeth, and Deacon Dave Drachlis for their work on the audio/video team.









New Clergy Introductions

Birmingham Convocation: the Rev. Cameron Nations (St. Luke's Birmingham), the Rev. Corey Jones (St. Francis of Assisi Indian Springs), the Rev. Worth Stuart (Holy Apostles Hoover), and the Rev. John Burress (St. Stephen's Birmingham)
Montgomery Convocation: the Rev. Jamie Osborne (St. John's Montgomery)
Tennessee Valley Convocation: the Rev. Danny Whitehead (St. Bartholomew's Florence) and the Rev. Katherine Harper (St. Thomas Huntsville)

Election Results

DIOCESAN COUNCIL

Southern District - The Rev. Jack Alvey, St. Paul's Selma, (2021)
Middle District - The Rev. Katie Rengers, The Abbey Birmingham (2021)
Middle District - The Rev. Huey Gardner, St. Mary's on the Highlands Birmingham (2019)
Northern District - The Rev. Aaron Raulerson Epiphany Guntersville (2021)

STANDING COMMITTEE

The Rev. Andy Keyes, Trinity Florence (2022)
Ms. Katie White, St. Thomas Birmingham (2022)

DISCIPLINARY BOARD

The Rev. Evan Garner, St. John's Decatur (2021)
Mr. Hank Poellnitz, All Saints' Birmingham (2021)

Resolutions

Resolution 1: Diocesan Budget — Covenants (Approved)
Resolution 2: Diocesan Budget — Trust & Designated Funds (Approved)
Resolution 3: Camp McDowell Budget (Approved)
Resolution 4: Full Inclusion of Deacon at Diocesan Convention (Approved as Amended by more than 75% in both Orders)
Resolution 5: Canonical wording change referring to Unsecured Debt (Approved by more than 75% in both Orders)
Resolution 6: Canonical wording Change referring to Group Insurance (Approved by more than 75% in both Orders)

Resolutions amending the canons approved by more than 75% voting in both Orders became effective at the close of Convention.

For complete coverage of the 187th Diocesan Convention, including video reports, live stream, and photos, visit http://dioala.org/dfc/newsdetail_2/3189769.