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Greetings in the name of our Savior.

Creating community in The House of Deputies is a challenge. Every three years, more than 1000 deputies and alternates gather for more than a week of legislation, worship and “family reunion.” Since at least one third of the deputies are new, the senior House is not immediately a community. On the other hand, The House of Bishops not only has little change in its membership but it meets regularly throughout the triennium, providing ample opportunity to build relationships and familiarity.

This moment of history is a challenge as well. As I approach my “three score years and ten” I cannot remember a time when “community” has been so devalued in both the secular and sacred world. My biblical mentor reminds me constantly that, in the East, scripture is read as “we” where, in the West, it is usually “I.” The 15th Chapter of Luke has become a Rosetta Stone, unlocking more of the mystery of Jesus Christ. I don’t consider it a coincidence that each of the parables in that chapter, The Lost Sheep, The Lost Coin and the Lost Sons, ends with a community celebration.

Over the last three years I have redoubled my efforts to be in touch with hundreds of you by phone, e-mail, and many “parish calls.” Using what I have heard, I am planning the following for The House of Deputies of the 75th General Convention of the Episcopal Church:

- **Prayer.** We are called to be a community of prayer. With the enthusiastic partnership and leadership of the Presiding Bishop we are planning an “Octave of Prayer” immediately preceding the General Convention. Materials will be provided well in advance to assist in bringing this about. Suggested by a successful precedent set in the Diocese of Maine, we will ask the whole Episcopal Church to pray from Pentecost through Trinity Sunday, which is the Sunday immediately preceding the first legislative session. I know that many congregations and individuals have already begun prayer for the Convention and its membership. I cannot adequately express just how much that means for all of us.
- **Conversation.** The General Convention encompasses a whirlwind of events. Sitting in one of the largest legislatures in the world is a rare experience. Yet, there is little opportunity for deputies from diverse dioceses, nations and cultures to share their

personal faith with each other. Therefore, to help us “seek and serve Christ in all persons” all deputies and first alternates, will be invited to participate in a conversation following orientation on Monday, June 12th. Small groups will be seated in the worship area. Deputies and first alternates who are available for training on Monday morning will be asked to serve as facilitators. You will be invited to join a specific group so that you may participate with people of other dioceses, people you may not already know well.

- Since the length of Convention has been reduced by one day, legislative time will be scarcer than usual. Nevertheless, I hope that each morning we may begin with a ten-minute faith story concerning mission and witness. We must never forget that the Church meets in the General Convention for the purpose of enhancing our service and witness of Jesus Christ. This will be an opportunity to hear different voices and different vocabulary from faithful members of the Church. I hope it will ground us for debate on several hundred resolutions.
- During the Convention there will be visiting bishops and other leaders present from the Anglican Communion. I will ask The House of Deputies for permission to seat them for part or all of a session in our House. Almost all of them have connections to specific dioceses in our Church as potential hosts. Our polity is a puzzle to many in the Communion and I would like the visitors to share the experience of well-prepared laity, deacons and priests all sharing in the decision- making of a Church which is trying to practice the “Ministry of the Baptized.”
- I have asked four deputies to serve as a team of Chaplains. In recent Conventions our wonderful Chaplains have expanded the role to that of Pastor to the House. As we work together to strengthen this community, I believe the team will be better able to meet the very diverse needs of a colorful and energized group of Christians.

In the days ahead, we will do all we can to get timely information to you to prepare for this Convention. I will be working with our Chancellor and other canon lawyers to see how much work we may be permitted do before the Convention begins. I am deeply grateful for the commitment and faithfulness of each of you. It is a great privilege to work with you all.

Thanks be to God.