

The 76th General Convention



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Anaheim, California



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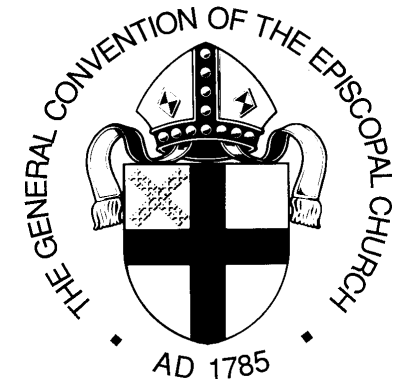
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The Role of a Deputy



Almighty and everliving God, source of all wisdom and understanding, be present with those who take counsel for the renewal and mission of your Church. Teach us in all things to seek first your honor and glory. Guide us to perceive what is right, and grant us both the courage to pursue it and the grace to accomplish it; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen*

The Book of Common Prayer, 1979, pg. 818

dep·u·ty

n., pl. –ties.

1. A person appointed or empowered to act for another.
2. An assistant exercising full authority in the absence of his or her superior and equal authority in emergencies: a deputy to the sheriff.
3. A representative in a legislative body in certain countries.

n. – suplente, sustituto, represante, delegado,

adj. – suplente, sustituto adjoint, remplocant, suppleant, delegue

Our Role in the Past

To understand the role of the deputy in the General Convention, it is helpful to look back at the history of how that role and its title evolved. The first Episcopal Church convention was in 1785. The *Journal* reads: “Clerical and Lay Deputies from several states assembled. . . .” By 1792, the *Journal* had adopted the usage of the “House of Clerical and Lay Deputies” in order to distinguish a body separate from the existing House of Bishops established in 1789. The present name, “House of Deputies” began formal use in 1886.

Not surprisingly, the earliest Diocesan conventions adopted existing legislative models. The Episcopal Church in America was not immune to revolutionary ideas of the English reformation, including representative governance in church affairs, and these ideas prevailed in the early Episcopal church councils. Representatives to church councils were deputized to act fully and freely on behalf of what they thought to be the best interests of the church while they deliberated in the confines of council.

The concept of a deputy as a fully independent representative is clear in a 1901 Constitution change that proposed admitting missionary district “delegates” as representatives to convention with seats but with limited voting rights. The wording was amended to “deputy” in the final text to grant honor in the name to

the representatives of missionary jurisdictions.

In her opening address to the 73rd General Convention, President of the House of Deputies Dr. Pamela Chinnis stated: “The House of Deputies was a complete innovation when this church was organized following the American Revolution. Laity, clergy and bishops have an equal voice in determining policy, establishing our legal framework and maintaining a living liturgical life.”

Our Role Today

The nature of the events that took place in America between 1782 and 1789, and the use and meaning of the word “deputy” help us to understand our role as deputies today. We are elected to General Convention by our own diocese. As deputies, we know our diocese, and the people of the diocese know us. We are not elected simply to represent the views of our diocese or any particular constituency.

Deputies are extraordinary representatives who, “ideally. . . should reflect the will of the whole Church, act for the whole Church, and speak to the whole Church.”

We are deputies because we are trusted by our diocese and by the deputies from other dioceses to be informed and to prepare ourselves through study and prayer

prior to General Convention. While at General Convention, we are charged to **listen** to other deputies, bishops and guests; to **share** our own thoughts and ideas; and to **attend** and **vote** at all legislative sessions. We are trusted to cast our votes informed by prayer, factual information, and the workings of the Holy Spirit. We have a responsibility to report back to our diocese after General Convention, and to the best of our abilities, convey how we voted in light of what we experienced and what we learned.

Most importantly, it is our primary responsibility as deputies to watch for, to expect, to pray for, and to be open to the Holy Spirit. God guides and governs church affairs. To this end, the Holy Spirit dwells in the church and presides in its councils. What a council seeks to understand, by its debates and votes, is not the mind of the majority of its church members, but the mind of the Spirit.

Peace,



Bonnie Anderson, President