Committee proposes $23 million cut in budget

BY MARY FRANCES SCHJONBERG

The mission, ministry and infrastructure of the Episcopal Church would be nearly $23 million leaner if the 76th General Convention approves the 2010-2012 budget presented on July 15.

The proposed budget represents the "crafting of a new look at what the Episcopal Church should be doing now for (and with) our dioceses, congregations and members to enable their own missions and ministries more effectively," Diocese of Connecticut Bishop Andrew Smith, Program, Budget and Finance (PBF) co-chair, told a joint session of the houses of Bishops and Deputies.

"We believe that this budget is responsive to the gospel, the voice of the convention and the economic realities of our time," Smith said, reading from the committee's presentation letter that accompanied the budget document presented to the houses.

The budget, as outlined in Resolution D067, aims at "giving to others first and then to ourselves last," according to the presentation letter.

A budget line item dedicating 0.7 percent of income to U.N. Millennium Development Goals work, cut from a draft version of the budget, was restored, and a corresponding percentage for domestic-poverty initiatives was added.

PBF's proposal predicts total triennial income of $141,271,984, with $79,161,193 coming from the...
Bishops call for collection of resources for same-gender blessings

BY PAT MCCUAUGHAN AND JERALD HYCHE

The House of Bishops voted 3 to 1 on July 15 “to acknowledge changing circumstances” that call forth a renewed pastoral response from the church for considering same-gender blessings.

That response, at least for the time being, was a substitution for Resolution C056, to create an open process and invite church-wide participation in collecting and developing theological resources and liturgies. The resolution now heads to deputies for approval.

Before a packed gallery of spectators, bishops extended debate, proposed numerous amendments and took a 20-minute time-out for private discussion before adopting the substitute legislation 104-30 with two abstentions.

The measure authorizes bishops, in conjunction with the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music (SCLM), to devise an open process, to invite participation and theological reflection, and to report their efforts to the 77th General Convention in 2012.

Bishops whose dioceses and jurisdictions have legalized same-gender marriage or authorized civil unions or domestic partnerships “may provide generous pastoral response to meet the needs of members of this church,” according to the resolution.

Bishop Tom Ely of Vermont told bishops that, after discussions were postponed July 14, he and Bishop Pierre Whalon of the Convocation of American Churches in Europe hosted two forums attended by 26 bishops.

“We are grateful for the time we spent in this conversation and urge that similar opportunities be provided at future meetings of the House of Bishops,” Ely said.

The substitute C056 resolution was drafted by a handful of bishops who attended those gatherings. Ely emphasized that it was not a report, “nor should it be viewed as a statement of agreement, but rather as a renewed framework for our legislative discussions.”

Some bishops attempted unsuccessfully to discharge the resolution.

After the vote, the Rev. Susan Russell, president of Integrity USA, an LGBT advocacy group within the Episcopal community, called the vote “a big step forward on same-sex blessings.

“I trust the process and most of all I trust the Holy Spirit present in the process,” she said. “I have seen us do hard things well many times, and I was convinced this would be one of them. I just could not believe that this church isn’t bigger and better and stronger than many were giving it credit for. I am delighted to be moving forward.”

But most bishops said same-gender blessings are not a foregone conclusion.

Rather, Bishop Neil Alexander of Atlanta, who voted for the legislation, said, “There’s a lot of ground between here and there” or blessing same-gender relationships.

“It doesn’t really change from a previous General Convention resolution in 2003 that recognizes congregations are operating within the bonds of our common life by responding with a wide range of pastoral responses to the needs of the members of the church,” he said.

That’s very important to understand. We didn’t bless or move toward blessings any more than we were.”

“The majority of people here in Anaheim who represent a broad spectrum of the church are very interested in moving forward.

“That doesn’t mean that the perception of the greater communion won’t be that permission was given, or that people in my own diocese won’t perceive that permission was given. But we didn’t authorize anything other than the collection of material.”

Bishop Jeffrey Lee of Chicago, who voted against C056 and was part of the discussion sessions, said, “There’s a lot of ground between here and there” or blessing same-gender relationships.

“Nothing we did today actually did anything other than provide for the collection of and design of rites for a conversation. That’s very important to understand. We didn’t bless or move toward blessings any more than we were.”

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Advocating for justice

BY JANET KAWAMOTO

Far from being wide-eyed and shy, the eight 20-something members of the Episcopal Peace Fellowship’s (EPF) Young Adult Presence at General Convention demonstrated a deep grasp of issues and an even deeper determination to do something about them.

The young adults, either college students or recent graduates, all are active in their local congregations and dioceses in various peace and justice issues, such as food banks, shelters, women’s rights, gay and lesbian rights, education equality and children’s issues. All are first-time General Convention attendees.

At a meeting at the EPF booth in the Exhibit Hall July 14, they discussed their favorite issues and their reactions to the General Convention process.

Anson Stewart, who lives in the Diocese of Los Angeles when he’s not attending Swarthmore College in Pennsylvania, is especially interested in environmental-justice issues, bringing together the Episcopal Church’s response to global-climate issues and economic matters, especially those touching the most vulnerable populations of the world.

 Asked if he found the church’s response to such issues adequate, Anson said, “Yes, in the specific resolutions” that he was tracking at General Convention, but that the church’s overall responses to justice issues are not necessarily strong enough.

Catherine Healy of Oregon said that, as someone especially interested in “women’s rights and gay rights as a reflection of our Baptismal Covenant,” she was “amazed” and pleased by the House of Bishops’ vote in favor of an amended version of Resolution D025, which affirmed the openness of the ordination process.

Michelle Harvey of Oregon said that she was very anxious before the bishops’ vote that the resolution would be defeated. “I have a lot more faith in the bishops now,” she said.

One of the group, who was not present for the meeting, is Nedgie Vixamar of Haiti. EPF is active in the Diocese of Haiti, and a resolution supporting that effort is pending before convention, said the Rev. Nicole Janelle, who with the Rev. Valerie Bailey Fischer is coordinator for the young adult presence. Vixamar testified at a committee hearing on the matter.

Although all of the participants did their homework before they arrived and come prepared to speak to certain issues, they discovered new things to be concerned about, said Bradley McDonald of Michigan. When he listened to committee testimony, he said, he heard for the first time about the difficulties experiences by transgendered people who have been passed over for jobs or promotions because of their sexuality, or feared to come out. “I found that moving.”

Jessie Smith of Olympia, Wash., did encounter some resistance, but “I didn’t know it until after I suggested a change,” she said.

Several people told her later that she was undermining their resolution, although the committee accepted and incorporated her suggestions into the version it approved.

Most of the young adults said they were encouraged by the convention process, which they found mildly intimidating but generally accessible. “I was surprised by [the] progressive spirit I find at convention,” commented one participant. “It was also a little discouraging that I had to come here to find that.”

S.O.U.L. youth equipped for leadership

BY ENS STAFF

Meeting the Presiding Bishop, exploring the Exhibit Hall, serving as lay eucharistic ministers and visiting with church leaders were just some of the agenda items for a group of 11 young African Americans visiting General Convention under the auspices of the Office of Black Ministries.

The young people, ages 14-17, are participants in the S.O.U.L. (Spiritual Opportunity to Unite and Learn) leadership conference, which for the first time in its 10-year history is being held concurrently with General Convention.

“The S.O.U.L. Conference equips black youth and young adults with the tools to grow into visible leadership positions at all levels within the church,” said the Rev. Angela S. Ifill, program officer for black ministries in the Episcopal Church’s evangelism and congregational life center. “We work to mine our youth’s existing leadership abilities and nurture their sense of belonging, not only in their local churches, but at the [wider] Episcopal Church as well.”

Besides convention activities, the teens are engaging in spiritual formation, including Bible study; witnessing and studying legislative processes; completing a group project on domestic poverty; and participating in leadership-skills training.

“When I listened to our guest speakers, who shared with us their visions of mission and justice, I had an epiphany that the church is not just a religious body, but a mission-focused and conscious entity,” said Angelina Sanchez, 17, a member of St. Thomas’ African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas, Philadelphia. “As a youth leader at my home church, I now have the confidence and skills to develop a program that has the potential to impact the lives of people at my church and my larger community.”

“I am not an Episcopalian,” said Emuna Rajkumar, 15, of Orlando, Fla., “but my experience at the S.O.U.L. Conference has helped me to form an opinion that the Episcopal Church seems to be one of the most inclusive churches I have experienced. At the exhibition hall, we were able to ask questions and participate, in a safe space, while witnessing the visible examples of the church’s open-minded approach to the world.”
Mandatory health plan to cover all clergy, laity

BY MELODIE WOERMAN

The House of Deputies July 15 concurred with action by the House of Bishops on July 12 to adopt resolution A177, which establishes a mandatory health plan for the Episcopal Church through the church’s Medical Trust. The resolution passed on a voice vote.

The plan applies to all domestic dioceses (including Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands), congregations, parishes, missions and church organizations mandated by church canons. It would provide parity of coverage to all lay and clergy employees working at least 1,500 hours a year. People employed by institutions such as schools, day-care centers and other diocesan institutions can opt to participate but will not be required to do so.

Dioceses will select the plans to be offered from those provided by the Medical Trust. Church Pension Fund officials have estimated this plan could save $134 million in its first six years.

Most deputies who spoke on the resolution favored its adoption.

The Rev. John Baldwin (Southern Virginia) said he spoke on behalf of the National Network of Episcopal Clergy Associations, which fully supports the plan. “It boils down to: Who do you trust?” Baldwin said. “In a time when trust is in short supply, the Church Pension Fund has over and over again proven itself to be responsive, faithful and diligent in its work.”

Toni Mari Sutliff (Utah) said that, without passage, some church employees will face financial difficulties. “Those of you who are not single, those of you who are maybe older and have health problems, the cost of your insurance will go up, and it will be harder for a parish to call you as their clergy if they know their cost is going to be so high,” she said.

The Rev. Sandye Wilson (Newark) said, “Recognizing how easily we can go under as churches with the rising costs of health care, I urge the passage of this. It is both pastorally and fiduciarily responsible. The Medical Trust has been incredibly creative on making sure that those who need to opt out can opt out, those who need to opt in can opt in, that the laity is being well cared for. I believe this is good for everybody.”

The Rev. Robert Haskell (Albany) and the Rev. Edward Monk (Dallas) expressed concern that this plan would increase costs on small parishes that currently purchase health insurance outside the Medical Trust. Monk said, “I’ve heard from a number of vicars and rectors in small congregations in our dioceses who say that, if this is passed and they work more than 30 hours a week, they will be out of business or forced to cut other ministry positions. Given that there are a wide variety of options, I find that we should not pass this but rather encourage people to find cost-effective, local solutions.”

According to information provided by the Church Pension Fund, of which the Medical Trust is a part, implementation will begin in the fall of 2009, with completion by Dec. 31, 2012. “Waves” of dioceses will be brought into the new system each succeeding year.

Bishops say ‘all’ is inclusive enough

BY JERALD HYCHE

The House of Bishops July 15 adopted an amended version of Resolution C061, which would change the canons to say that “all baptized persons” have full access to any ministry, lay or ordained.

The amended measure, which proposes a change to Title III, Canon 1, returns to the House of Deputies’ consideration.

The resolution originally included the statement that no person would be denied access to ministry because of “gender identity or expression” – as well as “race, color, ethnic origin, national origin, sex, marital status, sexual orientation, disabilities or age,” as already included in the canon.

Bishops, however, changed the resolution to eliminate all these descriptions, agreeing that they are unnecessary and perhaps even limit the resolution’s primary intent of including “all baptized persons.”

“What is it about ‘all’ that we don’t understand?” Bishop Suffragan Catherine Roskam of New York asked her colleagues. “It’s like trying to thank the ECW. There will always be someone’s name you’ve left off. I propose we go with the ‘all’ and let it be ‘all.’”

The decision came after discussion about what “gender identity or expression” means.

Bishop Mark Andrus of California read definitions as presented by the transgender community:

- Gender identity: an individual’s internal sense of being male, female or something else; since gender identity is internal, one’s gender identity is not necessarily visible to others.
- Gender expression: how a person represents or expresses gender identity to others, often through behavior, clothing, hairstyle, voice or body characteristics.

The House of Bishops also adopted Resolution B029, which calls for eliminating the House of Deputies’ consent to bishop elections if they occur within 120 days of General Convention. All such elections would be approved by diocesan standing committees instead.

It is “fundamentally unwise to have two different groups doing the important work of discernment with respect to consent,” said Bishop George Counsell of New Jersey. “Whatever the rationale was for this constitutional provision, it no longer seems to make any sense.”

Bishop Edward Little of Northern Indiana said he supported the change because “standing committees are in the discernment business ... whereas at General Convention, we get caught up in this hurly-burly of politics. The more careful discernment that can occur in dioceses gives us a more prayerful process.”

The resolution goes to the House of Deputies for consideration.

In other business, the bishops adopted and sent to the House of Deputies:

- Resolution B004, which calls for a feasibility study for revising The Hymnal 1982 to include hymn texts developed over the past three decades.
- Resolution A088, which calls for adding Rachel’s Tears, Hannah’s Hopes to be added to the Enriching Our Worship series for 2010-2012 with a few minor changes in the text.
Focus on the environment now, Bishop Charleston says

BY LYNETTE WILSON

Future generations will look back on the Episcopal Church aghast that it spent 30 years talking about human sexuality and largely ignoring the ecological disaster affecting the world, said Bishop Steven Charleston in his July 15 sermon during a General Convention Eucharist that celebrated the day’s theme: creation care.

“For years now the environmental movement has told us that there is a clock ticking, a clock ticking, a great organic ecological clock that is ticking away the time of our lives to that when we no longer will be able to reverse the damage that we have done to this planet through our own greed, negligence and ignorance,” said Charleston, assistant bishop of California and provost of Grace Cathedral in San Francisco.

The Eucharist was paperless. There were no worship booklets and hymns were projected on three screens behind the altar.

Charleston continued: “Why is it that we do not hear that? Why is it that around this world of ours, though there are good men and women all seeking to help save the earth, that there is not this huge outpouring of sudden activity as the bell rings in our ears to save the earth?”

It is because, he said, “we have been distracted.”

Besides being distracted by discussions on human sexuality, the church has been worrying about its institutional survival; its relationships in the Anglican Communion; money, budget sheets and head counts, Charleston said.

“I am here to tell you that unless we recognize that there is a higher, deeper calling that lies behind all of these needs ... none of our hopes and dreams, whether they come from conservative hearts or liberal minds, will sustain the day on anything we have been discussing, for all will be for naught, all will be for naught lest we wake up and pay attention to the underwriting great issue of our day.”

The Episcopal Church continues to address environmental issues, including global warming, through legislation passed at General Convention, advocacy work by the Office of Government Relations and its commitment to the U.N. Millennium Development Goals, the seventh of which specifically underscores the issue of environmental sustainability.

There are up to 15 environment-related resolutions under consideration at General Convention that take steps to address climate change, global warming, economic and environmental justice, renewable energy, and nuclear energy and weaponry, and that would establish a liturgical creation cycle during Pentecost.

General Convention also took steps to offset the carbon footprint of the convention by buying $6,524 in emissions reductions from the Greensburg Wind Farm project and the Hillcrest Family Dairy Farm Methane project. The General Convention office also worked with NativeEnergy, a climate-solutions provider and leader in the U.S. carbon market offering services that reduce carbon emissions to fight global warming.

“Based on NativeEnergy’s carbon calculator tool, we will emit 259 tons of emissions (carbon dioxide equivalents) and use approximately 1,035,000 kilowatt hours (kWh) of electricity while at the convention,” said Michael Schut, the church’s economic and environmental affairs officer, in his July 13 blog.

Scientific evidence links the buildup of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases in the atmosphere to global warming.

“Bishop Steven Charleston urged convention-goers to reverse damage done to the earth.

“The day will come when the future will look back on what we have been doing here and see in our discussions – though they appear to us, in this moment, so fraught with importance – issues as antique as the concern to whether or not women could have the right to vote and whether we should stop the practice of child labor,” said Charleston. “And yet they will consider our folly on a planet that is but a burnt cinder, compared to the garden that has allowed us the luxury to have these self-same debates. They will live in a world in which wars over water will make ours over oil pale in comparison.”

But, he said, it needn’t be so. As the history of the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion have shown, people can live in peace even when they disagree and people are capable of living in harmony with the natural world.

“In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, I call upon the presence of the Holy Spirit ... the spirit of the very earth itself, and ask that that Spirit come into this room and touch each and every one of you who is listening to me now,” Charleston concluded. “Let your mind be opened to the truth of what I have spoken here today, let your heart be set on fire ... be not afraid, Episcopal Church, but stand proud and tall into this great commission of God.”

“This is our moment, this is our time, this is our call, and under an anointing of the Spirit of God we will not fail in that call but be in the vanguard of a change that will resound around the world full of hope and grace to renew humanity itself through the hope and power of Jesus in whose name I have preached and in whose name I have prayed.”
The proposed budget would be based in part on a change in the formula for asking

**BUDGET BY THE NUMBERS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>2010-2012 Revenue</th>
<th>2010-2012 Expenses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PBF proposed</td>
<td>$141,271,984</td>
<td>$140,856,531</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Projected 2007-2009 revenue</td>
<td>$164,863,529</td>
<td>$163,934,334</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Projected 2007-2009 expenses</td>
<td>$163,934,334</td>
<td>$163,934,334</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposed diocesan asking formula</td>
<td>2010: 21% of income less $120,000</td>
<td>2011: 20% of income less $120,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current formula (unchanged since 1997)</td>
<td>21% of income less $100,000</td>
<td>21% of income less $100,000</td>
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The 110 dioceses to contribute to the cost of funding the wider church. The current request for 21 percent of income (known as the asking) would be preserved for 2010, but it would then drop annually by 1 percent in 2011 and 2012. In addition, the $100,000 income exemption would be raised to $120,000, thus leaving more money with the dioceses.

“We’re trying to be realistic in looking at the economy,” Adams-McCaslin said in an interview, adding that the committee’s three bywords for its process and the resulting budget have been “honest, accountable, transparent.”

The committee also has been guided by Jesus’ metaphor of pruning that leads to new growth cited in John’s Gospel and by the belief that “the Holy Spirit is already at work with new initiatives,” she said.

Indeed, at the beginning of the joint session, Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori acknowledged that “death will be reflected in this budget ... it will to some of you feel like a heart attack.”

“This church, however, lives in eternal hope of the resurrection,” she added. “We believe through grace that this church will emerge more able to respond to its vocation.”

Adams-McCaslin said that the committee hopes that the movement towards a 19 percent diocesan asking shows that the Episcopal Church takes seriously the calls the committee heard for transparency and accountability, and the dioceses in turn “will honor the asking and that we all meet in the middle.”

Twenty-eight dioceses have committed to pay the current 21 percent asking, according to the most current information available. Six dioceses committed to slightly more than that. Twenty-six dioceses have not filed the required reports that allow for a calculation of the diocese’s operating income. Each year’s annual giving is based on a diocese’s income two years earlier.

“This budget asks the church to live within its means,” Adams-McCaslin told the joint session. “We cannot spend what we will not give.”

If each diocese gave the full 21 percent, the church would have $6.5 million more in annual income, according to PBF. Each 1 percent reduction of the 21 percent asking means $925,000 less in income, and every $25,000 increase in the $100,000 exclusion reduces annual income by $583,000.

Based on the changed asking formula, income from dioceses is expected to be $28.3 million in 2010, $26.3 million in 2011 and $24.4 million in 2012 for a total of $79.1 million.

Investment income, which amounts to 20 percent of revenue, is expected to total $27.6 million over the triennium. Sixteen percent of triennial income would come from government money granted to the church for its refugee-resettlement work. Eight percent comes from other income, including such items as rental income, advertising, subscriptions and merchandise sales.

Sixty-two percent of PBF’s proposed budget would be spent on mission and ministry while 22 percent would support the corporate portion of the budget, which covers administrative support of the church’s office. Sixteen percent would go to the canonical categories, which include the offices of the Presiding Bishop and the president of the House of Deputies, in addition to General Convention and the CCABs.

The House of Bishops will take up the budget on July 15. The House of Deputies must concur with the bishops’ decision for the budget to be adopted. Either house may amend it, but, if a specific line item is increased, the amendment must specify which other line item would be decreased.
BY SHARON SHERIDAN

The Prayer Book, Liturgy and Music committee on July 15 approved a long list of resolutions for consideration by the House of Bishops.

Among others, the resolutions recommend establishing an Episcopal Relief and Development (ERD) Sunday during Lent; referring resolutions to the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music (SCLM) that propose an alternate Baptismal Covenant and various calendar commemorations, including a possible creation season; directing SCLM to develop a rite to observe the loss of a companion animal; and directing the commission to confer with the Standing Commission for Constitution and Canons about matters affecting liturgical translations.

Resolution A178 originally asked for the first Sunday in Lent to be designated ERD Sunday, but several committee members objected either to designating a Sunday or to specifying that particular Sunday.

“I think it’s really important for us to remember our liturgical calendar and how primary that is for us,” said the Rev. Ruth Meyers (Chicago), adding, “I fully agree that Lent is an appropriate time for us to be remembering the work of Episcopal Relief and Development and give special attention to supporting it.”

“I really don’t like naming a particular Sunday,” said Chicago Bishop Jeffrey Lee. His preference was for “during the season of Lent” or, if specifying a Sunday, making it the fourth Sunday of Lent, he said. “The first Sunday of Lent is such a major feast of our year.”

Luke Fodor of ERD told the committee, “The whole idea is just to underscore the work that Episcopal Relief and Development does, and Lent is an ideal time to do that. I know having one particular Sunday is easier to do resourcing for it, but I think having a Sunday in Lent works easily as well.”

The amended resolution the committee recommended would “encourage dioceses, congregations and individuals to remember and support the lifesaving work of Episcopal Relief and Development during Lent through prayer and a special offering.”

The committee also recommended referring to SLM an amended version of Resolution D005, which proposes an alternate Baptismal Covenant for possible inclusion in supplemental prayer book materials. The proposed rite rephrases the format of the affirmations so that those making the vows, rather than the celebrant, state the content of the affirmations. For example, the celebrant would ask, “How will you each remain faithful to these things you believe?” and the people would reply: “With God’s help, by continuing in the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and in the prayers.”

Some committee members praised the alternate form as a way for adults joining the church to claim the words of the covenant and, as Cynthia Bartol (Virginia) stated, “take responsibility for what they are promising.”

Several members, however, urged caution.

“What we have to consider,” said Bethlehem Bishop Paul Marshall, “…is that even in the Rite 3 marriage service you have to use the vows in the regular marriage service based on the idea that everybody in the church who makes that fundamental life commitment has to use the same words … so it’s a big step to say that in an even more fundamental commitment, there is a choice about how you say the words. I’m not saying it’s a bad thing. I’m just saying this would be a serious step.”

Lee said, “I would find it a very helpful catechumenal resource. I think it is a very big step to offer it as an alternative.”

“With due regard for some very creative work, I will be voting against this resolution,” said Missouri Bishop George Wayne Smith, bishops’ committee chair. “The precious unity that we have achieved around the Baptismal Covenant in its current form is something that I’m not willing to sacrifice.”

Deputies approve lay pension plan, covenant study

BY MELODIE WOERMAN

The House of Deputies tackled a wide range of resolutions during its second session July 15, which marked the deadline for action on resolutions that require the concurrence of the House of Bishops.

It approved Resolution D020, which asks dioceses to study the Ridley Cambridge Draft of a proposed Anglican covenant – or any that might come after it – and report their comments to Executive Council, which then is asked to make a full report to the General Convention in 2012.

Most speakers favored adoption of the resolution. The Rev. Ellen Neufeld (Albany) noted that deputies previously had expressed a commitment to continuing participation in the Anglican Communion. “This resolution does not finally commit us to the covenant,” she said, “but it keeps us at the table, it keeps us part of the process.”

The Rev. Ian Douglas (Massachusetts) said, “Three years ago we did commit ourselves as a church to participate in the development process of a covenant, not a specific text. This church has been incredibly faithful to that task, both with the Nassau Draft and also the St. Andrew’s Draft. This resolution calls us to continue in the same good faith.”

The resolution now goes to the House of Bishops for action.

Deputies also approved Resolution A138, which changes church canons to implement a mandatory pension plan for lay church employees who work at least 1,000 hours a year. A lay pension plan first was mandated by General Convention resolution in 1991, but a study of employees found that not all who qualified were offered the chance to participate in the plan.

This resolution already was passed by the House of Bishops, so the deputies’ action finalizes it.

In other action, the House of Deputies adopted:

- Resolution A074, a lengthy theological statement that will guide interreligious relations.
- Resolution B007, which allows any bishop of a diocese, not just the diocesan bishop, to make an official parish visitation at least every three years.
- Resolutions on the church’s internal life, including concurrence with the bishops on a program for formation of newly elected bishops (A008) and encouraging those preparing for ordination to engage in cross-cultural formation (A135).
- Resolutions on a series of social and national issues, including support for civil rights for transgendered persons (D012); a call for labor law reform legislation (D039); support for the victims of human trafficking (A167); a call for peace between Israel and Palestine (B027); a repudiation of the doctrine of discovery in relation to indigenous peoples (D035); and a call for pandemic preparedness (D063).
Letters about the resolution that affirms the openness of the ordination process

I congratulate the progressive bishops who approved D025. I lament that it was not unanimously passed. Who we are as a freedom-loving, God-loving and God-loved people is best expressed in the fullness of our personhood. Attributes of that personhood extend in every direction – spiritual, physical, emotional and sexual. God bless us, every one!

Timothy J. Mannion
Montclair, N.J.

I am a cradle Episcopalian. This is not the church I grew up in! Why is current leadership on a mission to destroy the church? Finances are in shambles, yet we continue on this road. What does leadership not understand [about the fact] that people are leaving and not interested in what your model is or what you are selling? I feel my church has been taken from me and now I must go somewhere else. My parish is already struggling, and I am one of the top 25 pledgers. They will have to figure out what they are going to do without my pledge. That unfortunately is the only vote I have!

David Launder
Shawnee Mission, Kan.

Hallelujah! I’m so proud of us. May God bless all those who voted for inclusiveness and sanity and love. I pray that those who just don’t understand yet will try to be the best people they can be and stop judging others. I pray also that we don’t split from the Church of England – that we may still be in the Anglican Communion.

Carol Estornell
Drexel Hill, Pa.

“...a 2-1 margin adopted a resolution July 12 that declares the ordination process of the Episcopal Church open to all individuals while expressing its ongoing commitment to the Anglican Communion.” Considering that all of those who voted for this measure have no concern for keeping the Episcopal Church within the Anglican Communion, anyone who voted yes should be removed. You say you are committed to the communion but do not care for nor consult the other branches.

Nathaniel Talcott
Alexandria, Va.

Dear friends, congratulations on your historic step toward an open and honest church.

Ann Craig
Newburgh, N.Y.

In last Sunday’s Gospel reading in Mark, we see that John the Baptist was beheaded for being prophetic and speaking God’s truth. To hear lay and ordained say that all persons are allowed access to all the sacraments is refreshing. I love the Anglican Communion but not to the place that I must exclude whom God welcomes at baptism and for all of the other sacraments of the church. It is time for all of us to be prophetic and not exclude, bar or place moratoriums on anyone that God calls to ministry and service in God’s church. This is not my, your or our church. It is God’s church, and we are only members of it.

The Rev. Donald Frye
Naperville, Fla.

Obviously the Episcopal Church no longer cares about the Anglican Church being catholic (i.e., one church). Until now I was with the Episcopal Church despite my own church in Fairfax, Va., leaving, but now I realize that our church has come under the control of extremists that have no concern for the Anglican Union.

Nathaniel Talcott
Alexandria, Va.

Couldn’t we please have the courage to say that we have come to understand human sexuality differently than we once had, and that we believe that “alternative lifestyles” are completely legitimate? Furthermore, that had the Scriptures been written in this contemporary context, they would have affirmed these lifestyles. If we cannot say that, are the actions our church is taking truly appropriate?

Brian Gloe
Mission Hills, Kan.

I have tried to accept this idea, and I can’t. I can’t alter my beliefs, based on biblical teaching, to have them coincide with the acts of the Episcopal Church. I have no choice but to look for another church. I am saddened that it has come to this. You can’t accept portions of the Bible as the foundation for your religion, and ignore others when it is expedient. Following the teaching of Christ in a secular world is hard. The Episcopal religion is today an easier religion than yesterday.

Ed Scott
Green Valley, Ariz.

I can only think of one appropriate Episcopal response to this joyous event: Thanks be to God!

Greg Phipps
Louisville, Ky.

I am wondering if God has any say-so in the midst of all of this. I thought that our sole purpose in the kingdom of God was to please God. After all, it is his kingdom, isn’t it?

Ann Caldwell
Charleston, S.C.

I have been praying for discernment for all participants in the convention, and I continue to do so. I rejoice in passage of this bill by the House of Bishops.

Carolyn Woodward
Albuquerque, N.M.

D025 is a big, big mistake. It is going to separate us from most of the rest of the Anglican Communion, likely result in the Episcopal Church being kicked out and its gradual demise such as the demise that has left the United Church of Christ a shadow of what it once was. What it provides is already the case in much of the Episcopal Church and really didn’t need to be said. B033 needs to stay in place. It may be the only thing keeping us in the Anglican Communion for the time being.

Frank Miles
Little Rock, Ark.

Send your comments to
letters@episcopal-life.org
Continuing dioceses: The church is alive and well

BY SHARON J. TILLMAN

Bishops and deputies from what are known collectively as the four continuing dioceses of the Episcopal Church, individually the Dioceses of Fort Worth (Texas), Pittsburgh, Quincy (Illinois) and San Joaquin (California), have had a chance to settle into General Convention and focus on the work at hand – committee assignments, legislative sessions, amendments, votes, elections, worship and fellowship.

As the close of General Convention nears, attendees who have remained loyal to the Episcopal Church after leaders of their dioceses departed over theological differences shared their experiences and what they hoped to bring back to their dioceses and parishes.

Across the board, each person interviewed reported a warm welcome from bishops, deputies and visitors. Others often have sought out members of these dioceses to talk about the work they are doing and sometimes simply to ask how things are.

“Many deputies have come by our table to extend a personal welcome and express their support,” said Deputy Jan Dunlap (San Joaquin). “Identifying my diocese as San Joaquin is usually met with a big smile and ‘glad you’re here.’”

Compared to past conventions, this one is not only welcoming but also “less contentious,” said Stephen Stagnitta, Pittsburgh alternate lay deputy. “The people I run into are happy to see us here. I had the opportunity to work on the legislative Evangelism committee here and was well-received. The reception is like you would have hoped.”

The most recent diocese to experience a split was Quincy. For Deputy Tobyn Miracle General Convention has been a catharsis of sorts. She described the conflict as a heavy weight that is physically and emotionally exhausting.

“There’s almost a palpable, physical relief to feeling welcome, to feel that you are at a place you can call home,” Miracle said. “The conflict goes deep, and you begin to feel that the issue is irreconcilable, but as a Christian you want to be in loving communion with everyone. Being here, it’s almost as if the weights and chains that are confining you break. At last I can speak my mind and heart without worrying about what someone’s reaction might be.”

Several people reported the joy of celebrating the diversity of the Episcopal Church.

“Those welcoming us cross all boundaries, representing a full range of perspectives,” said Nancy Key, chair of the delegation from San Joaquin. “This inclusive support is the visible sign of the broad spectrum of the Episcopal Church.”

Said Miracle, “We still have a diverse diocese, and those who remain value the Episcopal Church and see a church where we can listen and hear each other’s voices.”

While the deputations and bishops from these four dioceses have been welcomed, blessed and praised for their perseverance, some people have expressed reservations about the amount of money being spent in litigation over church property.

“Some few have voiced concern that the cost of our litigation is depleting the resources for mission and ministry,” said Deputy Margaret Mieuli (Fort Worth). “I would remind them that we are attempting to recover more than $100 million of Episcopal property in our diocese. We are contributing our fair share for the first time since 1991 and are strongly supporting Episcopal programs such as Episcopal Relief and Development and United Thank Offering.”

Paul A. Colbert, one of the 50 volunteers from San Joaquin, said he was pleased that so many friends from around the country had offered to lend assistance to the diocese.

Added Mieuli, “A long list of people from all parts of this church have offered themselves as resources to us as we renew our diocese. With all this assistance, we are not just surviving, we are thriving.”

Asked what the members of the deputations and bishops would bring back to their respective dioceses and parishes, the answers included “the goodwill and prayers of people throughout the church,” from Jerry Lamb, provisional bishop of San Joaquin, and the news that the Episcopal Church is alive and well.

“I will bring back the good news that the Episcopal Church is vibrant and alive,” said Deputy Michele Racusin (San Joaquin). “Our heart is in mission, and our mission is spreading the gospel by what we say and what we do. I will bring back hope.”

An overwhelming theme from the San Joaquin group is transparency. The Rev. Glenn Kanestrom, deputy, said, “In the past, the former bishop [John-David Schofield] built huge walls around the Diocese of San Joaquin. Now, with God’s help, those walls have been torn down and it is time to connect our parishes with all that the wider church has to offer. I’m bringing everything back that I can to celebrate what has long been withheld: the depth and breadth of this great church.”

In Pittsburgh, communications is seen by Stagnitta as critical. “I think one of the things we’ll need to do is bring back the story of what happened here,” he said. “There are 28 parishes in our diocese, and we want to make sure we communicate what has occurred and give them things they can build on from this convention. We want to make sure that what was done here becomes something that can be used by the parishes.”

The resources available to all members of the Episcopal Church that might be taken for granted in other dioceses are invaluable to a continuing diocese. “There is a wealth of programs offered in the church that I am only now discovering” Deputy Victoria Prescott (Fort Worth) said. “I am very excited to take so many new ideas back to the diocese.”

“There are many resources available to us where before we were kept from other members of the church,” Miracle said. “I want to take back tools for rebuilding the mission and ministry of the diocese.”
Diocese of Los Angeles Ready for Strategic Vision

La Diócesis de Los Ángeles está lista para la Visión Estratégica

The Episcopal Church’s Strategic Vision for Reaching Hispanics/Latinos was approved under Resolution D038 earlier this week, and already, the Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles is making plans for its implementation.

The Reverend Tom Callard, Chair for the Program Group for Latino/Hispanic Ministries of the Diocese of Los Angeles, is ready to apply the Strategic Vision. The Los Angeles Plan calls for a survey of 147 aging and non-Spanish speaking congregations that have little connection with the heavily Latino/Hispanic population outside their doors. They hope to recruit 15 congregations to begin Latino/Hispanics Ministries from three categories: those who have the resources and inclination, those who have the inclination but no resources; and those who have the resources but no inclination.

The Los Angeles Plan also calls for language and cultural training for all seminarians. It suggests that seminarians meet one-on-one with parishioners giving them an immersion experience. They will also be hosting an “Inquiry Day” with the Bishop, Commission on Ministry and Deployment staff to identify, recruit and promote leadership for ordained and lay vocational ministry in Latino/Hispanic Ministry. The diocese is also thinking through alternative plans for candidates to the priesthood that have language barriers, can’t relocate and need to keep a full time job, making it impossible to pursue their call.

To become a friendlier church to Latinos/Hispanics the Los Angeles plan will revamp their webpage to include Spanish, create an informational brochure, and intentionally gain entry into Latino/Hispanic media; give small grants for direct mailings campaigns to congregations and host Newcomers Day with the Bishop.

To provide spiritual formation the Los Angeles Plan creates a resource web page where congregations share successful programs, 6-8 week Alpha and Beta courses to help members learn about the church, and curricula and training to learn how to run retreats.

The Diocese of Los Angeles finds the Strategic Vision for Reaching Hispanics/Latinos not only necessary but, extremely timely.

- Eddie López
Multicultural Ministry

ST. GEORGE’S EPISCOPAL CHURCH in Hawthorne, California was established in 1937 as an English-speaking congregation. In the years since, the congregation has developed in different directions and has been involved in different ministries. In 1999, the leaders of the church developed a new vision for the church. With the help of the Office of Multicultural Ministries of the Diocese of Los Angeles and under the direction of Bishop Jon Bruno, the leadership of St. George’s elected the Rev. Martír Vasquez as their Vicar, with the intention to develop a multicultural church, using the small English-speaking congregation as its foundation.

Under Rev. Martír’s leadership, the congregation worked to position itself in the community and focused on welcoming new families. In the beginning of Rev. Martír’s ministry at St. George, he offered two services, one in English and one in Spanish. Then a group of lay persons from the English-speaking service suggested it may be best to unite both services into a single, bilingual service. The creation of this service allowed St. George’s to work as a unified family with a representation of four ethnic groups: Anglos, Latinos, Nigerians, and Palestinians.

With an appreciation of the different cultures, the members of the church understand the importance of being involved in different ministries. St. George is involved in various programs developed to help those in need; programs like: Crop-Walk, an ecumenical program developed to collect funds to support various food programs; Low Income Families Project, a program that helps low-income families with food for special occasions; and, St George Mobile Clinic provides medical exams every July to persons with no health insurance.

St. George’s vision is to invite all persons to share in its diversity, and with its ministry to celebrate, love, and serve God.

-Nancy Frausto

Los Sacramentos: símbolos de santificación
Este libro, escrito en colaboración por cuatro autores, es un instrumento excelente para nuestra catequesis y pastoral ministerial. Con frecuencia se había pedido material sobre los siete sacramentos. Aquí se ofrece de una manera sencilla y práctica teniendo presente el Libro de Oración Común y la experiencia ministerial. Será muy bien aceptado por nuestras comunidades.

Está disponible por $3.00 por copia en el puesto de Forward Movement #618 o en el Internet: www.forwardmovement.org

Ministerio multicultural

LA IGLESIA EPISCOPAL DE SAN JORGE en Hawthorne, California fue fundada en 1937 como una congregación anglohablante. En los años desde su fundación la congregación se ha desarrollado en diferentes direcciones y se ha involucrado en diferentes ministerios. En el año 1999 los líderes de la iglesia desarrollaron una nueva visión para la iglesia. Con la asistencia de la Oficina de Ministerios Multiculturales de la Diócesis del Los Angeles y bajo el liderazgo del Obispo Jon Bruno, los líderes de la Iglesia de San Jorge nombraron al Padre Martír Vasquez como Vicario para desarrollar una iglesia multicultural, teniendo como base la pequeña congregación anglosajona.

Bajo el liderazgo del Rvdo. Martír, la congregación trabajó en proyectarse hacia la comunidad con un plan de acción que enfatizaba dar la bienvenida a familias nuevas. Al principio del ministerio del Rvdo. Martír, la iglesia ofrecía dos servicios, uno en inglés y otro en español, pero un grupo de laicos de la congregación angloparlante sugirió que era viable unir los dos grupos en un solo servicio bilingüe. La creación de esta misa permitió que la iglesia funcionara como una familia unida, con la representación de cuatro grupos étnicos: Anglos, Latinos, Africanos de Nigeria, y Palestinos.

Con un aprecio de las diferentes culturas, los miembros de la iglesia comprenden la importancia de involucrarse en diferentes ministerios. La iglesia está involucrada en varios programas que ayudan a los necesitados; programas como: Crop-Walk, un programa ecuménico para colectar fondos para los programas que proporcionan comida; Proyecto para Familias de Bajos Ingresos, un programa que ayuda a familias de bajos ingresos conseguir comida en fechas especiales; y La Clínica Móvil de San Jorge, para proveer exámenes médicos cada julio a personas que no tienen seguro médico.

La visión de San Jorge es de invitar a la gente que comparten nuestra diversidad con la misión de celebrar, amar y servir a Dios con sus ministerios.

-Nancy Frausto

¡Hay Blog en español durante la Convención General!
La dirección electrónica para la página de Blog es:
http://episcopalchurch.typepad.com/bloggersontheground/
KEVIN ROMERO is the Assistant to the Deputy Executive Officer, Caspar Van Helden of the General Convention Office; and is the first Latino to hold this position. He was first introduced to the Episcopal Church through a temporary assignment working for the Office of Ethnic Congregational Development; starting in the Office of Latino/Hispanic Ministries, then expanded to the Asian, Indigenous and Black Ministries. Kevin feels “very fortunate to have been part of the support staff of the Hispanic/Latino Ministries because of the people with whom I interacted and the type of work that was done nationally and internationally with Province IX.” His current functions entail overseeing the Deputies Management Systems database, setting up meetings, monitoring expenses and overall making sure that everything flows smoothly day to day. Kevin also secures that all of the delegates and alternates to General Convention are appropriately processed. We can say that he is the behind the scenes go-to-guy.

Kevin sees himself as a highly spiritual person, born and raised in New York, he was baptized and confirmed Roman Catholic. He lives for the greater good, stating that, “he does his best to be a better person.” Kevin, although not an Episcopalian, takes pride in what the church represents, so much so that he goes on to state “I plug the church to all of my friends, encouraging them to explore the Church... The Episcopal Church is so much more attractive than the other denominations.”

“In my present position I get a lot of people who reach out to me for assistance. I have found myself handling and mediating various types of inquiries from the Latino/Hispanic community. My position allows me the opportunity to be able to present these concerns and requests to the proper channels.” He has the privilege of being able to bring the issues to the appropriate tables.

- Rosanna Rosado y Alejandra Trillos

KEVIN ROMERO es el Asistente del Oficial Ejecutivo de la Cámara de Diputados, Caspar Van Helden de la Oficina de la Convención General; él es primer latino/hispano en ocupar este cargo. Romero empezó con la Iglesia Episcopal con un trabajo temporal con la Oficina de Desarrollo de Congregaciones Étnicas; comenzando en la Oficina de Ministerios Latinos/Hispanos, expandiéndose luego a los Ministerios Asiáticos, Indígenas y Negros. Romero se siente “muy afortunado de haber sido parte del equipo de apoyo de los Ministerios Latinos/Hispanos, por la gente con la cual tuve la oportunidad de interactuar y por el tipo de trabajo que se realizó nacional e internacionalmente con la IX Provincia.” Sus actuales funciones entranan la supervisión la base de datos del sistema de administración de diputados, la planificación de reuniones, el monitoreo de inversiones, y sobre todo, el asegurarse de que todo fluya sin inconvenientes día a día. Romero, también se cerciora de que los delegados y alternantes a la Convención General sean procesados adecuadamente. Podemos asegurar que él es el hombre “eras bastidores.”

Romero se ve a sí mismo como una persona sumamente espiritual. Nacido y criado en Nueva York, él fue bautizado y confirmado como católico romano y vive para el bienestar de todos, declarando que, “él hace lo mejor que puede por ser una mejor persona cada día.” Romero, aunque no es episcopal, se enorgullece de lo que representa la Iglesia, al punto de llegar a declarar que “yo recomiendo la iglesia a todos mis amigos y amigas, animándoles a que la exploren... la Iglesia Episcopal es mucho más atractiva que las otras denominaciones.”

“En mi posición actual consigo a mucha gente que acude ante mí por ayuda. Me he encontrado en situaciones, tratando y mediando con varios tipos de inquietudes provenientes de la comunidad latina/hispana. Mi posición me permite tener la oportunidad de encausar estas preocupaciones y solicitudes por los canales indicados.” Kevin Romero tiene el privilegio de canalizar asuntos ante las instancias más pertinentes.

- Rosanna Rosado y Alejandra Trillos

Ripe Fields: The Promise and Challenge of Latino Ministry

Why is the book on Latino Ministry written in English?

The Rev. Dr. Juan Oliver states, “I could have written it in Spanish, but its readership would have been unable to do much to address the challenges before us. The reason for this is that Latino ministry in American churches is still largely in the hands of non-Latino clergy and laity.”

Available for $16 at the Church Publishing booth #213 or online at: www.churchpublishing.org
Thank you for your hospitality St. Michael’s, Anaheim!
¡Gracias por su hospitalidad San Miguel Arcángel, Anaheim!
Delegates call special session to determine next steps on UTO advisory group

BY NAN ROSS

Delegates to the 46th ECW Triennial meeting went into a special session Wednesday afternoon after a morning plenary meeting revealed the misgivings of many members about the makeup of an Episcopal Church advisory committee studying the way the United Thank Offering is managed.

At the close of yesterday’s session, the delegates agreed to withdraw a resolution presented by Anne Hover of Northwest Texas and then asked their resolutions committee to draft a new one to be presented as part of this morning’s plenary session, their last of the meeting.

The matter concerns a 10-member committee appointed in February by Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori and House of Deputies President Bonnie Anderson to undertake a study of how the UTO handles its contributions—which totaled nearly $7 million over the past triennium—and its grant distribution process.

The committee has only one member representing UTO (Committee President Regina Ratterree) and no one to represent Episcopal Church Women, which works in close partnership with UTO.

Jefferts Schori appointed an advisory group to look at three things: the UTO’s relationship with the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society and how to comply with Internal Revenue Service rules, the “missional convergence” of the UTO Committee and the DFMS, and how to “enhance the effectiveness of the UTO Committee’s operations.”

Executive Council member the Rev. Ian Douglas, chair of the advisory committee, and Sandra McPhee, chair of the Executive Council’s International Concerns (INC) Committee, were among the five advisory committee members who attended the plenary meeting Wednesday. They were asked how many members of the advisory committee have direct experience with UTO and what the committee’s purpose was.

Robin Sumners, Ph.D., Diocese of Colorado UTO coordinator, addressed the morning gathering and later said she used the public narrative techniques she has learned at General Convention to express her concern.

“I told the advisory committee that I am a lifetime Episcopalian who grew up with UTO,” she said. “I grew up with blue boxes and knowing that UTO made possible the Presiding Bishop’s Fund for World Relief, which became Episcopal Relief and Development. I told them I couldn’t understand why there were no ECW members on the committee and only one UTO member. I told them ‘I’m going to name the elephant in the room, and it looks like a money grab to me.’”

After that a large portion of the delegates stood up and cheered. Sumners said she was encouraged by the response made by Douglas’, who said he agrees the study committee should have more UTO members on it and urged ECW delegates to take a stand.

Robin Sumners is Diocese of Colorado UTO coordinator. PHOTO: BEVERLY RUBECK
Triennial leaves behind outreach legacy to Orange Country’s Project Dignity

BY NAN ROSS

WHEN EPISCOPAL Church Women go to a city for their Triennial Meeting, they always leave behind a legacy of outreach to the community.

This time the recipient of prayers, money and supplies is Project Dignity, an Orange Country ministry that offers help to homeless families who live in residential motels.

Founded in 1991 by Dave Dunlap and his late wife, Linda, Project Dignity was nurtured in its early years by an Episcopal church. Five years later, it was reorganized and began focusing on the county’s low-income residential motels. Last year it helped 500 families at 23 motels.

Cordelia Burt, Province VIII representative on the ECW board and a member of St. Andrew’s, Taft, California, in the Episcopal Diocese of San Joaquin, organized the ECW effort after Donna Keller of the Diocese of Los Angeles recommended it.

Burt requested financial contributions, towels, socks, children’s books and hygiene products and got them. She collected $1,200 in cash at the Triennial meeting and hundreds of dollars in gift cards for meals and household items for the families.

She said the ECW board approved of Project Dignity because it strives to “fit their services to the ever-changing needs of the people it serves, and not the other way around. They do everything possible—sometimes the impossible—to ease the frustration and desperation” of the people they serve.

Burt added, “You saw tears from David (Dunlap) when he spoke to here earlier this week; when he sees what we’ve done by the close of our meeting, I can assure you there will be more.”

To learn more about Project Dignity, go to www.projectdignity.org.

A Triennial delegate learns more about Project Dignity at a display table with a prominent place in the plenary room throughout the meeting. PHOTO: BEVERLY RUEBECK

One of our Honored Women

SEVENTY-THREE Episcopal Church Women were recognized as the Honored Women of their dioceses for the past triennium. Here is a profile on one of them.

Sally Nichols has made a career of volunteering for the church, whether in her parish or at diocesan, provincial and national levels.

Currently the Province VIII ECW president and provincial representative, Nichols is on the province’s executive board and heads the women’s ministry cluster, which includes Church Periodical Club, UTO, ECW and National Altar Guild Association.

“I really feel like the women of the church bring such joy and healing,” she said.

At her parish, Church of the Good Shepherd, San Diego, Nichols leads a pastoral care group and with her husband of 41 years, Steve, is a member of the “bean counters,” a team that counts the Sunday offering. They have two grown children and a granddaughter, Olivia, 11 months.

PRAYER FOR TODAY

Thursday, July 16
Offer prayers of thanksgiving for new and retiring ECW officers and boards.

Episcopal Church Women’s Prayer
Almighty God, we pray that You will bless our work in mission and ministry in the world. Help us to pray fervently, labor diligently and give liberally to make known the power of your love given through your son Jesus Christ. Let us not forget the lessons from the past nor fear the challenges of the future. Anoint us with your grace and shine in our hearts as we reflect your light throughout the world. Amen.

MEET YOUR HOSTESS

Kay Alexander has been one of our Diocese of Los Angeles hostesses this week. A member of St. Mark’s, Upland, she is president of the diocesan ECW, which has focused on the Millennium Development Goals throughout her term. Alexander grew up a Methodist and became an Episcopalian in the last 15 years after finding a church where she felt at home. She and her late husband, Michael, were married 45 years. She has a grown son and a grandson.
Exhibit Hall closes today, bargains await

Shoppers can find bargains at the exhibit hall today with some of the vendors offering discounts. The National ECW’s booth has most items on sale at 50 percent off. “It is cheaper than carrying them home,” Myrna Obert, who oversees the booth, said. These shoppers were at the Diocese of Chicago ECW’s booth. PHOTO: BEVERLY RUEBECK

Chaplain offers a take home message

From the editor: We asked our chaplain, the Rev. Dr. Ellen Sloan, some questions to reflect on as the 2009 Triennial came to a close.

What has surprised you the most during your time with us?
Not actually any surprises but more a marvelous reaffirmation of the powerful energy of all Episcopal Church Women as they continue to address social justice issues both in this country and in the rest of the world. Their ongoing efforts, can-do attitude, and deep faith in God was rejuvenating and electrifying to me.

What do you wish us to take home?
Take home a renewed sense of how Christ calls each of us to be in relationship with God through listening hearts, open minds, and loving relationships with one another. It’s the only way that God’s grace will not only grow in us but also flourish, and be better able to flow out from us to others.

We are all related

SARAH EAGLE HEART, program officer for Native American/Indigenous Ministries, addressed the ECW Monday, telling the story of her rise to leadership in The Episcopal Church.

She said she only accomplished it with the support of church women and by calling for action. She told them of the words that end every prayer of the Lakota—Mitakuye Oyasin, meaning “we are all related.” She called the women to “remember we live in a world where we are all connected; and we are called by our baptismal vows to heal that wounded world.”

Eagle Heart is a member of the Oglala Sioux (Lakota) tribe of Pine Ridge, South Dakota. The Office of Native American/Indigenous Ministries is located in the Los Angeles Regional Office.

The Rev. Dr. Ellen Sloan is chaplain for the ECW Triennial Meeting.

Child of God, Sisters in Christ, when is the time to love somebody the most?

When they’ve “done good and made things easy for everybody?” That’s not grace-filled time. That’s our time on our safe terms. It’s comfortable, consoling, non-conflicting time—you know all those nice, warm feelings. And it usually doesn’t take a whole lot of energy on our part. And is that a bad thing on the whole? Of course not. We need those calm, comfortable times—we need those people who love and understand us. Life should not be constant conflict and dis-ease.

Unfortunately, life seems to hand us a good share of people challenges, doesn’t it? There always seems to be someone or some group in our personal lives or professional lives who is unlovable, and it takes an immense emotional effort on our parts to discover what hills and valleys they’ve been through to figure out why they’re so hard to love and why they’re “on our last nerves”—as my dear friend Toni used to say.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer has always challenged me with his understandings of people’s interactions and struggles, and his deepest belief that living in Christ, growing in God’s grace, can only be done together—right there in the joys and in the struggles. Living in Christ’s love can only truly be nourished in community with one another—in relationship with one another—no matter the difficulty.

The Rev. Dr. Ellen Sloan is chaplain for the ECW Triennial Meeting.