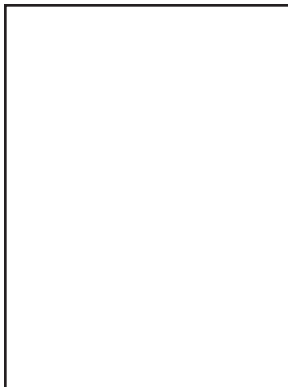


## Jubilee to be Convention's Theme



In a few short months, many of us in the Episcopal Church will find ourselves in Denver, taking part in the 73rd General Convention. This is an opportunity to come together as God's people to reflect together, to share in worship,

and to make decisions about our common life and mission. The theme of the Convention is Jubilee, "the year of the Lord's favor" as it is described in Isaiah 61.

The term Jubilee has become very much part of our vocabulary as we have focused on Jubilee 2000 and debt reduction, but Jubilee has a larger and wider application. The notion of Jubilee has its roots in the Sabbath, which is a release from usefulness and productivity. It is a way of saying we are more than what we do; we are more than what we can control, create, or bring into being. It is a day of solemn rest, as we are told in scripture. And the Sabbath, as it unfolds in Jewish consciousness, is for

everyone: it extends to one's family, one's slaves, one's livestock. In other words, the solemn rest extends to the whole of one's small world. All patterns of domination, all patterns of inequality, as master to slave or superior to inferior, are suspended and all enjoy a rest in which the organizing principle is God's own desire: God's own desire that all people and all things be in harmony with one another, all hierarchical patterns be set aside at least for a day, and all can enjoy a profound experience of mutuality.

I think it is very appropriate to be reminded at the time of General Convention of God's desire for us, rather than focusing solely on our own individual perceptions and desires of what should happen and what is right.

It is my prayer that this General Convention may be guided by the Spirit and that we may, by being attentive to one another as members of Christ in baptism, come closer to Christ who is the truth we seek.

*The Most Rev. Frank T. Griswold, Presiding Bishop and Primate, The Episcopal Church, USA*

*Once every three years, leaders – lay, clergy, and bishops – from every diocese in the Episcopal Church in the United States come together to conduct the affairs of the Church. This year's assemblage will be held in Denver, July 5-14. This issue of Vestry Papers is designed to provide vestries with a broad-brushed look at what will occur this summer and how Convention is structured. It is offered as a tribute to Dr. Pamela P. Chinnis, who retires as President of the House of Deputies where she has served for the last nine years.*

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## What is General Convention?

The Episcopal Church in the United States (ECUSA) is a member of the world-wide Anglican Communion, and the General Convention is its national legislative body.

The 73rd General Convention will meet this summer (July 5-14) in Denver. It will include over 800 members of the House of Deputies, composed of up to four clergy and four lay delegates from each of the 109 dioceses that make up ECUSA, and nearly 300 active and retired bishops, who compose the House of

Bishops. With its powers established by the first article of the Church's Constitution, this large meeting occurs every three years in order to conduct the Church's affairs. The Houses meet and act separately, and they must concur in order to adopt legislation.

The authority of the General Convention is broad. Among its responsibilities, it:

- can amend *The Book of Common Prayer* and the Episcopal Church's Constitution,

*(Continued on page 6)*

# General Convention and Your Vestry

by *The Very Rev. James B. Lemler*

The General Convention of the Episcopal Church will meet in Denver for the better part of two weeks this summer. It is quite an assembly of bishops and deputies from the several dioceses of the Episcopal Church. The Women's Triennial meets at the same time in one of the finest education events offered in the Episcopal Church. In addition, thousands of exhibitors, members, and friends of the Episcopal Church will descend on Denver for the Convention.

The General Convention is the national legislative body for the Episcopal Church. It does work mandated by the Canons of the Church. It also considers financial matters and legislation that is generated in many quarters of the Episcopal Church. In recent conventions, worship and learning occasions have become deeper and stronger in their presence.

**A primary question regarding the General Convention (and is especially important to the readers of *Vestry Papers*) is this: what does the General Convention have to do with local congregations?** Among the things learned in the recent Zacchaeus Report were two dynamics of life within the Episcopal Church. One was that Episcopalians (like other American Christians) find their primary experience and value of church life in local congregations. The other is that there are tensions and perceived distance between those local congregations and other "larger church" entities . . . dioceses, seminaries, and (yes) the General Convention.

How then can the General Convention be more connected to the lives of local congregations and be perceived as a real resource and leader for those local communities of faith? Let me first suggest a way that will not work. It will not be helpful for the 2000 General Convention to become bogged down and stuck in political, ideological and polarizing matters. I believe that this national body is not seen as serving congregations well when we become angry and divided over issues or when we become legislatively polarized.

**The great call for the General Convention this year and for years to come is to find ways of focusing on and resourcing the**

**mission of the Church.** Local congregations are interested in mission vitality and effectiveness. They want their National Church body to be similarly interested and to take leadership in mission. Local congregations desire a way for this important national body to focus on and lift up the realities of mission and the strategies of mission.

Let me give an example of one such General Convention attempt with which I am quite familiar. I chair the Standing Commission on Domestic Mission and Evangelism for the Episcopal Church. This "interim body" (as the commissions that work between General Conventions are called) has been working to develop a vision and imperative for the Denver convention that will focus on congregations, their mission and their growth, on evangelism, and on missional vitality for the Episcopal Church.

We will take an imperative to the General Convention entitled "20/20: A Clear Vision." The vision is to double the size of the Episcopal Church by the year 2020, but the areas of focus to achieve such a vision may even be of deeper importance: prayer and spiritual development, creative strategies for evangelism, congregational development, and the recruitment and formation of innovative leaders. We believe that these areas are essential for our mission and effectiveness, and we believe that they can join the work of the wider Church to that of the local congregation in new and exciting ways.

The work of the Standing Commission on Domestic Mission and Evangelism is but one effort among several that endeavor to connect the General Convention to the needs and experience of local congregations. The various commission reports and ideas are available on the web. Educational resources regarding the General Convention will be prepared for local congregations. The important thing is for us to see the work of the Convention as leadership, service, and resource for your congregation and every congregation within this Church.

*The Very Rev. James B. Lemler is Dean and President of Seabury-Western Theological Seminary in Evanston, Illinois.*

*Almighty and everliving God, source of all wisdom and understanding, be present with those who take counsel at General Convention 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, page 818

# A Sampling of Resolutions

As reported by David Kalvelage, Executive Editor of *The Living Church*, in the March 26th issue, the following is a glimpse of just a few of the resolutions that will be dealt with at General Convention this summer:

- **Double Membership** – “20/20: A Clear Vision” would double Church membership by 2020 through creative strategies for evangelism, prayer, recruiting, and equipping innovative leaders.
- **Recruiting Leadership** – \$500,000 annually in matching funds to parishes and dioceses would be used for recruiting, educating, and training evangelists and church planters.
- **New Fund for Ministry and Mission** – “The Alleluia Fund – Build My Church” would assist dioceses with new church development, revitalization of existing congregations, reaching children and youth, and ministering to those in need.
- **Dialogue with Presbyterians** – Would encourage bilateral dialogue with the Presbyterian Church.
- **Establishment of an Episcopal Youth Corps** – \$300,000 would be provided for its establishment to engage in servant ministry throughout the Anglican Communion.
- **Common Date for Easter** – Procedures from the World Council of Churches would establish a common date for the celebration of Easter as a

step toward unity.

- **Identification of “Safe Spaces”** – Would establish a formal process for parishes to identify themselves as “safe spaces” for lesbians and gays to tell their stories and be heard.
- **The Revised Common Lectionary** – Would amend the BCP lectionary, adopting the readings and psalms of the Revised Common Lectionary.
- **Discontinue the Existing System of Provinces** – Would discontinue the nine provinces and provide support for the “ongoing mission and ministry of existing networks within provinces.”
- **Anti-Racism Training** – Would require the Church’s lay and ordained leadership, professional staff, and members of committees to undergo training.
- **Census of the Church** – Would conduct a comprehensive demographic census by 2005.

Many other resolutions are already filed, and no doubt, more will come. The number threatened to gridlock the 1991 Convention, resulting in the Presiding Officers of both Houses urging everyone to exercise restraint and to coordinate legislative proposals on similar topics. This cut the number of resolutions by almost half in 1994, but it began creeping up again in 1997 (440 in all). So again this year, all parties are urged to refrain from introducing all but the most important resolutions.

*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good tidings to the afflicted; he has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor, . . .*

Isaiah 61:1-2

## The view from here is amazing.

Zacchaeus climbed a tree so that he might better see, and as a result, he was better seen. A different viewpoint may allow us to better see ourselves, and may well afford a clearer understanding of Christ’s vision for us. Building on the findings of the Zacchaeus Report and Trinity Institute’s Teleconference “Roots & Wings,” The Episcopal Church Foundation and Trinity Church Wall Street are pleased to offer

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(Continued from page 1 – Convention)

- can amend the Canons (laws) of the Church,
- determines the program and budget of the Convention itself and all missionary, educational, and social programs it authorizes,
- receives reports from various church committees and agencies,
- formulates policy, and
- elects half of the forty members of the Executive Council which administers policy and program between the triennial gatherings of Convention.

**The General Convention must act on legislation before it. It must also adopt a budget for the next triennium.** In order to make wise decisions on these issues, several documents are made available to deputies and bishops prior to Convention:

- **The Blue Book** – Chief among the documents, it contains reports and resolutions from the various standing committees and other interim bodies assigned to study issues and propose policy.
- **Proposed Budget** – This is distributed to help prepare for the hearings conducted during Convention by the Joint Standing Committee on Program, Budget, and Finance.
- **Deputy Handbook** – This document provides detailed instructions for filing resolutions, in addition to other legislative guidance.

Upon arrival at Convention, all bishops, deputies, and alternates receive a Legislative Notebook. This very large document contains legislative materials including copies of pre-filed resolutions, with room to add committee reports and other papers produced each day during Convention.

Legislative action begins in the form of res-

(Continued from page 4 – Commissions)

#### **Established by Rules of the Convention**

- Joint Standing Committees – members appointed by PB and PD; 3-year terms; no limit specified
  - Nominations
  - Planning & Arrangements
  - Program, Budget and Finance
- Trustees, General Theological Seminary – members elected by General Convention; no terms specified; not included in Convention budget
- Presiding Bishop's Council of Advice – president or vice-president of Provinces

olutions originating from four sources:

- **Standing Committees, Commissions, Boards and Agencies, and the Executive Council** – These resolutions may be included in their triennial reports, which are contained in *The Blue Book*. They are designated “A” resolutions and receive first priority in the legislative process. The budget resolutions also receive top priority.
- **Members of the House of Bishops** – As stated in the General Rule IV of the House of Bishops, resolutions must be proposed by one bishop and be endorsed by no less than two additional bishops, all three being from different dioceses. Individual bishops are limited to proposing no more than three resolutions, all of which are designated “B” resolutions.
- **Dioceses and Provinces** – These must be approved at their respective conventions, councils, and synods and are designated as “C” resolutions.
- **Members of the House of Deputies** – Similar rules apply as in the House of Bishops, and these resolutions are designated as “D” resolutions.

Since 1874, the General Convention has met simultaneously with the Triennial Meeting of the Women of the Church, approximately 500 delegates from diocesan chapters of the Episcopal Church Women who gather for worship and educational programs. This connection to General Convention was the only one available to women for the first century of the Church's existence in this country. They could not serve as Deputies until the Convention of 1970, and there were no women in the House of Bishops until the 1991 Convention. In more recent years, delegates to the Triennial Meeting have joined bishops and deputies for various joint sessions.

*Excerpts from the General Convention web site ([www.ecusa.anglican.org](http://www.ecusa.anglican.org))*

#### **Established by General Convention Resolutions**

- Reporting to General Convention:
  - Sexual Exploitation – appointed by PB and PD; continued until 2000
- Reporting to Executive Council:
  - Commission on HIV/AIDS – no terms or mechanism for appointment specified
  - Committee on the Status of Women – appointed by PB; confirmed by Executive Council; no terms specified
  - Committee on Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation – a combination of previous commissions

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# Kudos Dr. Chinnis –

## *for a job well done*

by Stephanie Cheney

Dr. Pamela P. Chinnis has seen a lot of “firsts” over her years of active involvement in the Episcopal Church. A first since she entered the arena of national church work: women were finally allowed a seat in the House of

Deputies in 1970. Another first: the ordination of women was approved at General Convention in 1979. And a very important first for her personally: she is the first woman to be elected President of the House of Deputies, an election that took place at General Convention in Phoenix in 1991. Of these firsts, she says, “I’ve seen a lot of significant changes in the Church over the years, and I’ve been touched by what they have meant to me and to other women across the Church.”

Pam Chinnis has served as President of the House of Deputies for the last three trienniums. She steps down this summer at the Convention in Denver where a new president will be elected. She completes fifteen years of active service as an elected officer of the Church – six years as vice-president of the House, and nine as its president. In an interview with Dr. Chinnis, she reflected on her years in office and some of her hopes and dreams for the future Church.

During her tenure, she has worked diligently to uphold the integrity of the Church’s bicameral system of government – a two-house system she inherited from her predecessor, The Very Rev. David B. Collins, and one in which she believes strongly. She says it hasn’t always been easy for two reasons:

- Some members of the House of Bishops hold the belief that the primary leadership of the Church emanates from that House.
- The House of Bishops meets twice each year, but the House of Deputies meets only once each triennium – at General Convention – and the roster can change significantly each time. She does communicate with all deputies 2-3 times each year through a newsletter designed to keep them abreast of all pertinent information.

Another way she has been able to insure the integrity of the House is through the appointment of all clerical and lay members to all Standing Committees within the Church – two-thirds of the membership of these committees. The other one-third is drawn from the House of Bishops and is appointed by the Presiding Bishop.

Dr. Chinnis cited two achievements during her nine years at the helm, which she feels have positively impacted the work of the Church. In her first year as president and during the tenure of Presiding Bishop Edmund L. Browning, she was able to implement the creation of a Council of Advice to assist her in making decisions and conducting the affairs of the office of president, an innovation that has been very helpful to her over the years. This required funding approval as well as approval on how the Council would be structured. Though the office of Presiding Bishop has had a Council for many years, there had never been one for the other office. An important difference between the two Councils is that the PB’s Council is composed of bishops, one from each of the nine provinces, elected by General Convention; and the President of the House of Deputy’s Council is appointed by the President – significant in that it allows the President the opportunity to handpick those with whom he or she wishes to work. The two Councils meet jointly prior to General Convention and on other occasions as deemed necessary.

Also during Bishop Browning’s tenure, she and the PB were able to establish a joint meeting of the chairs of the Cognate Committees, legislative bodies in each House with similar functions and responsibilities. This joint meeting occurred several months prior to the Philadelphia Convention in 1997. It was significant because, for the first time, these Chairs were able to meet face to face, hear the same legislative information, and begin to work together, rather than as unaffiliated entities.

When asked what she has enjoyed the most about being President, Dr. Chinnis replied, “The people I’ve met, and it’s the thing I’ll miss the most. I’ve been lucky. I’ve been able to travel around the Church and meet with

*... you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. In him the whole structure is joined together and grows in a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God.”*

Ephesians

*(Continued on page 4)*

*(Continued from page 3)*

many people. It's also allowed me to consult face-to-face with so many more of the deputies than I could have done otherwise." She also admitted she will miss the day-to-day operations and knowing what's going on – being in the loop. "The thing I won't miss is the hate mail. It can be daunting," she concluded.

On her hopes for the future, she would like to see the Church move ahead with ecumenical relations. She hopes the Church will turn its attention outward toward mission and cease having to deal with internal problems. "We spend so much time navel-gazing, that we don't look out beyond us." She also would like to see the House of Deputies acknowledged as an equal member of General Convention and not as a johnny-come-lately. "The House of Deputies has so much to offer, and besides, the early Church wasn't even sure it wanted to have bishops," she quipped.

On the recruitment of young clergy, she feels the Church must be intentional about it. "It's obvious we're going to have to recruit, particularly in light of the multi-cultural movement."

On the role of bishops, she feels that anyone elected bishop should have served as a deputy to General Convention. "You can't expect them to have any understanding of the polity of the Church if they don't even understand the Church."

On the House of Deputies, she expressed a great deal of respect for the "hospitable conversation" taking place within the House. "We're pointing in the direction where we may be listening to each other better. I pray that we can do that, and I think we can. I think people want the Church to stay together. God's already saved the Church – we don't have to. We just need to stay out of God's way."

Dr. Chinnis concluded that she's looking toward Denver with ambivalence. She's ready to move on to a new place in her life, yet she feels the House of Deputies has become her extended family. "It's not as though this was meant to be permanent, but it's been a wonderful experience."

Bravo, Dr. Chinnis, for a job well done!

*Information included in this issue has been obtained from the National Church's web page. For more detailed information about General Convention, please go to:*  
[www.ecusa.anglican.org](http://www.ecusa.anglican.org)

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## Commissions, Committees, Boards, and Agencies

The General Convention authorizes a variety of working groups – frequently known as "interim bodies" – to carry on the work of the Church between Conventions. These groups fall into several categories. Those operative during this triennium (1997-2000) are:

### **Councils, Committees, and Commissions**

(authorized by the Canons)

- Executive Council – Twenty members elected by General Convention, eighteen by Provinces; one six-year term; half elected each triennium
- Standing Commissions – Members appointed by the Presiding Bishop (PB) and the President of the House of Deputies (PD); 6-year terms; no limit specified. They are:
  - Anglican & International Peace with Justice Concerns
  - Church in Small Communities
  - Constitution and Canons
  - Domestic Mission and Evangelism
  - Ecumenical Relations
  - Liturgy and Music
  - Ministry Development
  - National Concerns

- Stewardship and Development
- Structure of the Church
- World Mission
- State of the Church (House of Deputies)
- President's Advisory Committee (House of Deputies)
- Title IV Review Committee – 5 bishops, 2 priests, 2 confirmed adult lay communicants; appointed by the PB and the PD; 3-year terms (members continue to serve if a case is pending); no limit specified

### **Boards** (established by Canons)

- Archives – appointed by the PB and PD; subject to General Convention approval; maximum of two 6-year terms
- Church Deployment – appointed by the PB and PD; subject to General Convention approval; one 6-year term
- Church Pension Fund Board of Trustees – members elected by General Convention; maximum of two 6-year terms
- General Board of Examining Chaplains – members elected by General Convention; maximum of two 6-year terms

*(Continued on page 6)*