



The Episcopal Diocese of Hawai'i

The Right Reverend Robert L. Fitzpatrick
Bishop

July 17, 2012

Aloha,

Bea and I returned late in the afternoon, on Friday, July 13, from the 77th General Convention of The Episcopal Church, which met July 5 to 12 at the Indiana Convention Center in Indianapolis. I had hoped to post during the gathering, but a shortened schedule and my commitments made this difficult. In addition, I have not yet learned to tweet or quickly blog. I need to practice. I do want to share my reflections as soon as possible. I offer these preliminary thoughts on the General Convention for our Diocese.

1. The 77th General Convention and the Presiding Bishop

This was my fourth General Convention [two as a clergy deputy (and co-chair of our diocesan deputation) and two as a bishop]. The General Convention of The Episcopal Church is composed of the House of Bishops (it includes all active and retired bishops of The Episcopal Church) and the House of Deputies (four clergy deputies and four lay deputies elected by the conventions of each of the 100 dioceses in The Episcopal Church).

This was the most confident and engaging General Convention I have ever attended. As I will note in comments on specific actions, this General Convention produced significant results that were honest and balanced, and sought as best as possible to honor different opinions. In the House of Bishops, Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori set the tenor and direction. Her careful and non-anxious leadership encouraged open and honest discussion.

2. Anglican Covenant and Continuing Indaba Conversations

The work of the General Convention is largely done in cognate committees made

up of members of both the House of Deputies (HoD) and the House of Bishops (HoB) with official recommendations being made to the HoD by the Committee's Deputy members and the Bishops making the recommendation to the HoB. Having served on the Ministry Committee and the Canons Committee in past General Conventions, the Presiding Bishop appointed me to the World Mission Committee this year. I must admit that after spending some years working on the ministry canons and then the clergy disciplinary canons at General Conventions and in ongoing task forces and committees, the World Mission Committee was informative, restful and even fun.

This year the work of the World Mission Committee focused on the Anglican Covenant and our relations with the Churches of the Anglican Communion. The Convention also affirmed its commitment to building relationships across the Anglican Communion, especially through the Continuing Indaba program (<http://www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/continuingindaba/index.cfm>).

The Committee crafted a resolution that stated that The Episcopal Church "declines to take a position on the Anglican Covenant." After considering eight resolutions, the Committee recommended the adoption of two resolutions on Anglican Communion relationships and the Anglican Covenant (see <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/commission/covenant/index.cfm>), a document that outlined a possible new formal relationship between the Provinces (national churches) of the Anglican Communion, and that intends to provide a way to hold Anglicans together across cultural and theological differences. Resolution D008 (see attached) affirms The Episcopal Church's Commitment to the Anglican Communion. Resolution B005 (see attached) states "...that following extensive study and prayerful consideration of the Anglican Covenant there remain a wide variety of opinions and ecclesiological positions in The Episcopal Church; and ...that as a pastoral response to The Episcopal Church, the General Convention decline to take a position on the Anglican Covenant at this convention...."

For the Diocese of Hawai'i, we can continue our conversations and partnerships with Anglican Churches in Asia [especially the Philippine Episcopal Church, the Korean Anglican Church, and Philippine Independent Church (full Communion partner) and in Polynesia (with Maori and other Polynesian Anglicans)]. Our Diocese also has historic ties with the Episcopal Diocese of Taiwan. I have been

invited to be an observing guest Bishop at the House of Bishops meeting of the Anglican Church in Aotearoa/New Zealand/Polynesia during the first week of October. I have been invited to visit the Anglican Church in Hong Kong and to meet with leaders of the Protestant Church in the People's Republic of China (the Three-Self Patriotic Movement of the Protestant Churches in China). I think we have much to learn from the Church in Asia and the Pacific.

3. Budget

Based on the Anglican Communion's "Five Marks of Mission, the budget for the Episcopal Church in the 2013-2015 triennium was adopted by the 77th General Convention on July 11 (see http://www.generalconvention.org/files/2013-2015_Five_Marks_of_Mission_Budget_Proposal.pdf)

The 2013-2015 budget is balanced at \$111,516,032, compared to \$111,808,350 for the current triennium. The spending portion of the budget for the next triennium is allocated according to the Anglican Communion's Five Marks of Mission (see <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/mission/fivemarks.cfm>) with the additional categories of administration and governance. The five marks are:

- To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
- To teach, baptize and nurture new believers
- To respond to human need by loving service
- To seek to transform unjust structures of society
- To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth

The budget assumes \$73.5 million in commitments from the Church's dioceses, nearly \$4 million less than that in the current triennium. That total is based on the 19% of annual operating income "asked" (not required) of each diocese to contribute annually to The Episcopal Church-wide budget. There was a "mind of the House of Bishops" resolution calling for a 15% asking and the commitment of all dioceses to that level of giving.

The General Convention also established a Development Office for The Episcopal Church to solicit major gifts and other resources.

For the Diocese of Hawai'i, I suggest the Five Marks of Mission is a healthy basis for our diocesan budget. It has also been suggested to me that the Diocese consider expanding the work of the Planned Giving Committee to seek gifts for diocesan ministries and grants.

4. Structural reform

Many of the resolutions submitted to General Convention and much of the discussion (private and public) was around the governance and organization of The Episcopal Church. Resolution C095 (see attached) creates a special task force of up to 24 people who will gather ideas in the next two years from all levels of the church about possible reforms to its structures, governance and administration. Its work will culminate in a special gathering of people from every diocese to hear what recommendations the task force plans to make to the 78th General Convention. The final report is due by November 2014.

Like The Episcopal Church and most dioceses, our Diocese has been struggling with how best to organize for mission and ministry. We reduced the size of the membership of governing bodies and have reduced the number of committees. Likewise, we recognize that congregationalism and isolationism must give way to cooperation, sharing resources and coordinated planning for the sake of the Gospel. Those same impulses are at work throughout the Church.

5. The Blessing of Same-Sex Unions

With minimal controversy, General Convention authorized provisional use of a rite for blessing same-sex unions. The motion in the House of Deputies carried with a vote of 78% in the clergy order, with the clergy in 85 deputations voting yes, 22 no, and 4 divided; and 76% in the lay order, with laity in 86 deputations voting yes, 19 no, and 5 divided. In the House of Bishops the resolution was adopted in a roll call vote of 111 to 41 with 3 abstentions (I voted yes). "The Witnessing and Blessing of a Lifelong Covenant" rite will be available for use starting December 2 (the first Sunday of Advent), but clergy will need the permission of their bishop under the terms of the resolution.

For Hawai'i, I will evaluate the current "Bishop's Guidelines Regarding the

Performing and Blessing of Civil Unions” (for current guidelines see http://s3.amazonaws.com/dfc_attachments/public/documents/3159497/Administration__Bishop_s_Policy_regarding_Civil_Unions_in_Hawaii__Jan_1__2012_.pdf) and make any needed changes to conform to the rite adopted by the General Convention for provisional use. The new policy for this Diocese will take effect on December 2.

6. Holy Baptism and Holy Communion

Resolution C029 affirmed The Episcopal Church’s teaching that Baptism is the norm for those who wish to receive Holy Communion. It “... reaffirms that baptism is the ancient and normative entry point to receiving Holy Communion and that our Lord Jesus Christ calls us to go into the world and baptize all peoples.” This reflects the Canons of our Church (and the historic practice of the Church): “No unbaptized person shall be eligible to receive Holy Communion in this Church” (Canon I.17.7).

In our Diocese, I expect this to be followed as the norm for teaching and that no invitation be made that explicitly or implicitly, verbally or in written announcements, invites those without baptism to receive the Sacrament. I will be issuing a pastoral letter and teaching on this in the next couple of months.

7. Palestine/Israel Positive Investment and Support of Gaza Hospital

The General Convention supported a resolution on positive investment in the Palestinian Territories. Resolution B019 (see attached) affirms positive investment “as a necessary means to create a sound economy and a sustainable infrastructure” in the Palestinian Territories. It also calls on the Church to support “the Jewish, Muslim, and Christian study on peace with justice in the Middle East.” The House of Bishops postponed indefinitely a conversation on corporate engagement. Several members of our Diocese testified on resolutions regarding Palestine/Israel.

General Convention also calls on the Church to support the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem’s Al Ahli Hospital in Gaza with fundraising and advocacy after the United Nations Relief and Works Agency cut its financial aid, slashing the hospital’s budget nearly in half. Donations can be made to the American Friends

of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem at <http://www.afedj.org/>. I hope members of our Diocese can be generous in support of the Hospital and the Diocese of Jerusalem.

I also assume discussions about Palestine and Israel will continue in this Diocese considering the level of interest and the direct connection of many in our Diocese with the Anglican Church in the region.

Conclusion

This was an important gathering for me. I am proud of The Episcopal Church and I have new confidence that we can face the future in a healthy and constructive way. Personally, I realized that Hawai'i is now my home, and that I no longer connect or even truly recognize Indiana. Some of my teachers in the House of Bishops are now retired or will soon be retiring. After over five years and two General Conventions, I am no longer a "new" bishop.

I was proud of our deputation and the work they did. We were well represented at General Convention. Our own Ryan Kusumoto was elected to the Church Pension Fund Board and David Jackson was elected to the Nominating Committee for the next Presiding Bishop. The deputation will be reporting to the Diocese. Should you have questions for me regarding General Convention, please do not hesitate to ask.

"Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labor is not in vain" (1 Corinthians 15:58).

Aloha ma o Iesu Kristo, ko mākou Haku,
+Bob

The Right Reverend Robert L. Fitzpatrick
+ Keali'ikoaokeakua