

REPORT ON THE 2009 CONVENTION
OF THE
EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF ARIZONA

The first workshop I attended was with the Delegates to General Convention. The discussion was on topics the delegates believed would come up at the Convention.

One was the continuing issue of other Dioceses dissenting the election of Gene Robinson as Bishop and the resulting legal issues of property owned by those Dioceses. Two Dioceses will be leaving the Episcopal Church of the United States of America at this time; the Diocese of Fort Worth, Texas and of Western Pennsylvania and two others may be leaving in the near future. There will still be a Diocese of the Episcopal Church in those areas, but they will be much smaller. The property of the Diocese will remain with the present Dioceses, requiring the resigning Bishop and congregations to find new locations for their future gatherings. Obviously, new Bishops will need to be elected in those Dioceses.

A related issue was the declining size of Dioceses. There was discussion about combining two or more geographically close Dioceses to reduce costs.

There was discussion about working towards partnering with the Methodist Church (they also have Bishops) as we have with the Lutherans. Their Bishops function in a very different way than ours do. They have less administrative duties and do mostly teaching and pastoring in their Dioceses.

There was discussion about the name The Episcopal Church of the United States of America. As a result of missionary work there are Dioceses in the Church that are outside of the 50 states and in other countries who are under TECUSA umbrella. A committee has been working to come up with another name that will be more inclusive of these Dioceses, but will not be making a recommendation to this General Convention.

The second workshop I attended was titled Church Marketing 101. Fr Vic, Ron & Dinah McCreery were also in attendance. The Cathedral Dean Knisley gave us an outstanding overview of what can be done to reach out to the unchurched in our community. My hope is that we four will get together soon to plan an affordable and workable campaign for our congregation to implement.

The third workshop I attended was about the new Episcopal Diocese of Arizona Credit Union that will be rolled out early next year. This is a very exciting program every Episcopalian Church and member or family member in the Diocese can participate in. We will be providing more information to the Vestry and the Congregation as this program is launched. Carol Gates also attended this workshop. Between us we will be sure to bring you more information soon.

The Bishop and Canon Dombek had lunch with all the Senior Wardens. It was a

wonderful way to meet other Wardens and to work together to discuss a number of "case studies" of problems and issues that arise which Senior Wardens may be required to deal with. Most required an immediate call to the Bishop! Which was good to know there was support at the Diocese for us. The Bishop said our main job is to be of support to our priest in every way that is necessary.

The Diocese will be hosting a Diocesan wide Vestry Retreat at Chapel Rock in Prescott on January 8-10, 2009. I'd love to have as many of our Vestry members attend as can go, so put the date on your calendar. The accommodations are comfortable and reasonable. The Diocese will be sending more information soon.

At the Convention itself, the Bishop's guests were the The Most Reverend Valentine Mokiwa, who is now Archbishop of Tanzania. He brought us greetings from his congregations and shared gifts of scripture with us. He has recently be diagnosed with diabetes. He extended an invitation to all Arizona Episcopalians to visit him in Dar Es Salam.

The second guest was the Bishop of the Diocese of Western Mexico and his representative who told us about their progress in reaching self sufficiency and their small seminary that is taking root. They invited all Arizona Episcopalians to visit them in Guadalajara.

The Bishop himself spoke to us on the theme of "All things come of Thee O Lord". His topic was money and finances. His talk was accompanied with a power point presentation of which I hope we can get a copy to present to our congregation. Perhaps even the video of the Bishop himself talking as it was entertaining, educational and uplifting. I don't believe any of us knew of so many ways we can help the Church financially without actually writing a check!

The speaker at Friday evening dinner was Mr. Glenn Holliman, Vice President of Giving Services for the Episcopal Church Foundation. He gave a personal testimony of his work with the Foundation and his witness to his journey. He will be retiring soon and I believe he spoke to us from deep in his heart of his life experiences. It was a heart warming, uplifting speech. Would that we all could say as much about the work we do when we are close to retirement. I believe we were all touched by the gift of his talk.

There was only one resolution presented and passed concerning the full inclusion of handicapped people in our churches. There were two amendments to the Constitution from General Convention. I can provide copies to anyone interested if the full text. The Canon was amended to allow the Bishop to approve congregations meeting without full mission or parish status.

Two important things I gained from my time at the Convention was an answer to the question of who we are: We are the people of the Book of Common Prayer. And, sometimes the most important thing we can do in a situation is to pray and encourage others to pray with us and to do so all throughout our day. It centers us, brings us into

focus, helps us to set priorities and brings us into community with others.

Bishop Kirk Stevan Smith plans superb events. Even though St Stephens is only allowed 5 delegates to Convention, I encourage as many members of the congregation to make plans to attend next year either as a delegate or a non-delegate. You won't regret going! You will be able to see first hand how vital his vision is for our Diocese and how dedicated our Bishop and his staff are to the building (rebuilding) of our Church.

God's Peace to You!

Respectfully submitted,
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