

The article below is the first reflection of three about our Annual Diocesan Convention. Currently our parish numbers allow us to have two delegates and one alternate. This year's delegates were Lynn Knox and Margaret Kirk, with our alternate Trish Taylor. These members are usually chosen by the rector, or a committee of the vestry and then approved by the vestry. Members must be known to the priest and treasurer, be active in the life of the parish. They also must be Confirmed or Received in the Episcopal Church, and able to go out of town in early November for the two day conference.

Margaret Kirk was introduced to the process last year when her daughter was elected by our Region (local episcopal churches are together called a Region) as the Youth Delegate. Margaret gladly stepped up this year to represent St. C's, and I will let her tell you her story. Please let me or a Vestry member know if you are willing to serve as a Delegate/Alternate in 2019. Also, take some time when you see them to thank those mentioned who served this year.
Fr. Peter

“Now Into The World”

By Margaret Kirk – St. Christopher's Springfield Delegate to Convention

Last year was the first time in my Episcopalian life that I attended a diocesan convention. I accompanied my daughter, 17 year old Laura, attending as a youth delegate representing our region. I was excited to see so many clergy and parishioners from all over the state converge in one moment in time. I mentioned to Lynn Knox, our veteran convention delegate, that I thought it would be a good idea for a new parishioner to attend every year. Sure enough Lynn made sure I returned this year as a delegate. Any parishioner can attend this annual meeting of clergy and lay persons dedicated to attending to the wellbeing of our diocese and our Church. You can attend as an observer or be selected to attend as a youth or adult delegate or alternate. The convention is a full two days of reports, debate and worship. As a delegate you are there to elect clergy and lay candidates to serve for limited terms to a standing committee that advises, supports and monitors our church leadership. You can also veto or endorse resolutions that can be as simple as thanking a faithful servant of the church or as complex as adding an assistant bishop to the diocesan payroll.

Here are some highlights of my convention experience this weekend:

-carpooling with Lynn a charter St. C's parishioner and Trish a recent arrival to the St. C's family. Both Lynn and Trish are phenomenal women who give so much to our church and community. If you knew how many loving hours these soul sisters dedicate to our church and neighbors you would be amazed.

-attending the workshop Redeeming Dementia in Our Churches with Dorothy Linthicum. Still raw from having recently lost 2 parents to brain disease it was hard for me to not sob out loud as Dorothy described a more accepting way to relate to brain disease as victim oneself or a loved one. She explained ways we can include our elders with dementia by accepting disruption the same way we welcome the behaviors of young children that can interrupt our service. Dorothy

perfectly described my own lived experience of attending to my parents prolonged decline and death when she noted, “deep and abiding experiences of God are lived by being in communion with people with dementia.”

-reconnecting with three priests who have been such a big part of my life: Neal Goldborough who married David and I and mentored us when we were newlyweds; Bishop Susan who was there for me when both Laura and Alton were babies and young ones; and Father Peter who is there for them as they navigate their teen years.

-witnessing the simultaneous mourning and celebration of Bishop Johnston’s retirement. My appreciation blossomed as I heard about the legacy of his ten years as Bishop, in particular how he steadily navigated the very turbulent and litigious waters that followed our Church’s decision to support full inclusion of LGBTQ+ persons in every aspect of church life.

-sensing throughout the convention an expression of a growing appreciation of our church’s willingness to be more outspoken and active regarding social justice. One of the panelists in a discussion entitled “Faith in the Public Square” spoke pointedly about this readiness noting, “the church is no longer at the center of our society. We have lost our moral authority and leadership because we have been too concerned about people leaving...prayer, education and action...being a witness in the world to God and God’s love is not foreign to who we are as a people of faith.”

I left the convention with a restored sense of awe for our beloved, historic, traditional yet modern, flawed yet wondrous, Episcopal Church. All I needed was a weekend and someone to tap me on the shoulder and ask me to go. Next year, for the 225th time, God willing the convention will convene again. I would like to see a first time delegate go every year. Tag! You’re it!