

80th General Convention of the Episcopal Church

Greetings from the Front Row

Hello from the Episcopal Church in Delaware. I was asked to share my point of view of the most recent meeting of our church, and here it is... for whatever it's worth.

This convention, unlike the others I have attended, was half as long and packed with nothing but legislation. There was little to no time to visit with other deputations on the floor, and meals were usually taken alone or with our own people. The Bishops were in a separate "pod" from the Deputies, and we only had one meeting together. There was no Triennial (ECW) meeting at this convention. COVID precautions were stringent – masking 100% of the time you were in the convention center and testing every morning (test kits provided at check in). This was bare bones work time, and all 802 deputies seated knew it. All the resolutions and hearings were done electronically before the convention ever began.

We began each day in worship – each house celebrating separately. The Prayers of the People in the House of Deputies included memorials for those former deputies who have died since the last convention, and those whose names had been omitted for whatever reason at prior conventions. Sermons were done by Presiding Bishop Curry, President of the House of Deputies Rev. Gay Clark Jennings, Bishop Eugene Sutton, Diocese of Maryland, and newly elected HoD president, Julia Ayala Harris.

After worship, we got down to the business at hand – the 421 resolutions that were deemed "essential" for the work of the Church. The first resolution passed by the House of Deputies was a memorial for those who had been killed at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in Vestavia Hills, AL – and a prayer of thanks for those who survived the shooting. The work that followed over the next three days involved the following: electing the first Latina – and youngest woman ever to serve as President of the House of Deputies; electing the first indigenous individual, also a woman, as Vice-President of the House of Deputies; determining that it is long past time to tell the truth with regard to the history of our church with regard to the treatment of people of color; further extending the work of Beloved Community; Allowing Puerto Rico to become part of Province II, instead

of Province IX; making certain we remember all our Episcopal brothers and sisters who are not native English speakers (this is an International Church with churches in Central and South America as well as Asia, Africa and Europe); electing trustees for the Church Pension Fund; discussing the state of membership in The Episcopal Church – and we are not alone in our difficulties; reviewing locations for future General Conventions – hard conversations, but no one came out and said “I’m right and you’re wrong.”

This was a time of hard stories and hard work. I left with one of the 26 cases of COVID, but am here to tell you that mine was a mild case and the vaccines and boosters did their job. This was a time of renewing our vows to treat all people in this world with dignity and respect, even when we do not agree. This was a time of hope for our future – despite what numbers may or may not say. I urge you to go to episcopalchurch.org and look at some of the resolutions that were debated and passed.

I was privileged to be part of this good hard work as an Alternate Deputy from the Diocese of Delaware With a foundation of love and caring that was formed, in large part, by my dear brothers and sisters at St. Christopher’s in Springfield, VA

In Christ’s Love, Helen