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Annual Convention Delegate Report 2025

Recap of the 231st Annual Convention – November 6 - 8, 2025

By “Telling our Stories—Sharing our Gifts,” deeper connections were made across the Diocese of Virginia at the 231st Annual Convention held November 6-8, 2025.

Participants at the Convention Center in Fredericksburg cast votes for resolutions and elected leaders. With local and global roots, clergy and lay people received honors for significant work.

Thursday, Nov. 6

The 231st Annual Convention opened with a service of Evensong. During his Pastoral Address at the service, the Rt. Rev'd E. Mark Stevenson set the tone for Convention attendees to lean into discipleship – “that process whereby we live more fully into the teaching of Jesus, patterning our life after his for the betterment of all” — and emphasized light and justice.

A famous example of reflected light shines in downtown Chicago, in the form of the massive [Cloud Gate sculpture, aka the Chicago Bean](#). Because of the Bean's unique curvature, he said, visitors can see more of the plaza in the sculpture's reflections than by actually looking around. However, “There are also some curious distortions in what you see – sort of like standing in front of a giant curved mirror at a carnival.”

His favorite view, Stevenson shared, “is at the very center of the underbelly – called the omphalos – a place where, looking up, the distortions become so overwhelming that you really cannot see reality – except for the very center.”

Stevenson used the Bean as a metaphor for discipleship in this time: “The reflections of tremendous beauty, the new angles that challenge us to rethink long-entrenched ideas, the distortions that can lead us astray, and the call to a center where everything unimportant fades away and we know that there is but one point of clarity for us all – as St. John remind us, ‘The true light, which enlightens everyone.’”

Stevenson invited attendees to “gaze upon the myriad reflections of grace and beauty that can be seen in the tremendous work” in the Diocese of Virginia. When he announced the identification of diocesan assets to be liquidated to fund the [\\$10 million diocesan reparations fund](#), the audience applauded.

“I see a \$10 million initial number not as a goal, but as a beginning,” he added. “This work is far too important to limit... and is a reflection of God's love and grace.”

Other reflections can be seen in ongoing racial healing and justice projects and pilgrimages; in new leaders; in sanctuary and support for vulnerable people, including LGBTQ, immigrant, incarcerated, and those laid off from government positions. Across borders, the diocese connects to uplifting projects in Haiti, Sudan, Honduras, Cuba, and Tanzania.

Youth programs reflect a promising future. [Shrine Mont Camps](#) reported a 12 percent increase in campers, and [Pathways to Prayer and Practice](#) is ramping up to increase and improve worship for and with children from birth through age 10.

Expressing gratitude for the reflection of God's grace at the convention, Stevenson highlighted the Diocesan staff and volunteers' vital contributions: "They're all just simply saints of God; the long hours and the stress-filled moments are nonstop for weeks leading up to this day, and they handle it all with grace and good humor." And he mentioned a personal milestone: his upcoming February wedding to Kendall Martin.

Returning to the Bean metaphor, Stevenson said, "It is also important to step back and pay attention to the distortions that we find surrounding us in our society, our culture, and our country in these days—especially when they reflect an abuse of our values, or a corruption of our faith."

Stevenson called out distortions that use the words of the Christian faith without "the true love and grace of God in Christ Jesus."

"When politicians call us to dream of a time before 'they' (whoever 'they' may be) started changing things, and work to take us back to such a time, it is then that the dream of God so eloquently described by Verna Dozer is being at best distorted, and at worse being outright ignored or lied about."

Stevenson shared examples of *the dream of God* being distorted:

- "When love of God and family is equated with the love of guns or racial purity..."
- "When the totalism of a movement often referred to as Christian Nationalism proclaims that one country is favored by God over all others..."
- "When Old Testament theology around the nature of a chosen people is co-opted for a modern and racist philosophy of Discovery and white-centric Manifest Destiny..."
- "When people who have followed the laws for seeking asylum in this country are rounded up by masked officials and held captive without due process or basic human dignity..."
- "When women, men, and children who have fled hunger or tyranny and come to this country without proper documentation, but who desperately want it and would willingly accept it, are subjected to that same cruel and authoritarian arrest"

policy while also being dehumanized and labeled as an 'illegal' instead of recognized as persons who desperately need our care and compassion...

- "When children are separated from their parents and put in cages by the government..."
- "When for-profit detention centers are the order of the day, when companies make a living off of locking up immigrants..."
- "When a religious leader stands before an elected representative and calmly begs for mercy for those living in fear and is labeled as 'nasty'..."
- "When supplemental food benefits for the unemployed and working poor are cut off while elected leaders throw lavish parties and play golf three days a week..."

"And when whole groups of people believe that these things – and more – are okay, then *the dream of God* has been replaced by a *human nightmare*."

Our duty as disciples of Jesus, Stevenson said, is to "stand firm and create not only *safe* spaces for people in need, but *brave* spaces for people to proclaim *right* in the face of *wrong*, and *love* in the face of *hate*.... to recenter ourselves and stand firm in the truth proclaimed at the beginning of the Gospel according to St. John:

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. [Not just those who look, pray, love, or speak like the privileged class, but all people.] The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."

He ended with a call to action. "Distortions of the gospel are evil. Do not give in to that fallacy," he said. "Instead, stay centered, stay focused, and speak the truth. Instead: Love Jesus. Embody Justice. Be Disciples."

Friday, Nov. 7

Making Disciples, Forming Christians, Developing Faith

Keynote sessions were delivered by Lisa Kimball, Ph.D., Vice President for Lifelong Learning at Virginia Theological Seminary.

"How fortunate we are to have this deeply knowledgeable, committed Christian apologist at the table with us," Bishop Stevenson said. "Dr. Kimball lives and breathes discipleship, Christian formation, and faith development."

Her session, Baptized for Life!, focused on the meaning and importance of baptism in the Episcopal tradition. Baptism is a lifelong calling to live out the good news of Jesus Christ in a world that is often broken, lonely, and divided. This was followed by a second keynote, From There to Here: Becoming Disciples, offered engaging conversation with practical tools to feed your spiritual journey. Her final session was Our Call to Action: Being Faithful Today.

Province III Deputies Elected

Convention delegates elected deputies to Province III, one of nine regional bodies within The Episcopal Church that facilitate collaboration, communication, and advocacy among dioceses. One clergy and two lay deputies were elected:

Clergy Deputy: Rev. Deacon David Curtis

Lay Deputies: Dr. Christine Cameron and Helen Penrod

Congregational Vitality Video

The Convention Members watched a video presentation on congregational vitality, emphasizing partnership between diocesan staff, clergy, and laypeople. The goal is to help churches become more skillful, faithful, and joyful. There's no one size that fits all, but churches increase vitality when they understand their context, strengths, and opportunities for growth, especially in changing neighborhoods.

"Here's the gold: We can't as church people figure out our great purpose that God is calling us into if we just stay in the church and listen to ourselves," The Rev. Shirley Smith Graham, the diocesan Minister for Congregational Vitality, says in the video.

"It's in relationship with the people outside of the church that we get to know what are the needs in this community? What do you expect of a church? What do you hope for in a church? And in those conversations between those relationships, the Holy Spirit speaks, and things become evident of what we need to be doing."

Tools for churches include demographic analysis (FaithX), congregational vitality assessments, and resources from the College for Congregational Development.

Convention Workshops

On Friday, delegates also visited exhibitors representing the Diocese and from across The Episcopal Church. After lunch, delegates participated in workshops.

[Convention workshops](#) were interactive, practical, and supportive of congregational vitality and growth. These focused on strengthening church communities, leadership, and discipleship.

Topics included hiring and retaining quality staff, personal storytelling as a tool for discipleship, creative uses for underutilized church property, engaging children in worship, and rediscovering church identity through storytelling.

Other workshops addressed global mission, racial justice and healing, the role of godparents, vocational discernment for all baptized members, stewardship of church funds, and youth/college delegate engagement.

Sessions were led by clergy, lay leaders, and subject matter experts.

Friday Holy Eucharist

The Rt. Rev'd Mark A. Bourlakas preached, and The Rt. Rev'd Gayle E. Harris celebrated. [Zaccheaus "Zacc" Katta was received](#) as a priest in the diocese from the Anglican Church of South India.

Bishop Stevenson called Katta's induction "a truly special part of our worship," adding that "this is a liturgy that, well, I've only seen a couple of times myself, and I believe it is a true gift to all of us, a gift to receive a fine priest and a gift to celebrate our connections all across the globe."

Saturday, Nov. 8

Elections to the Standing Committee

This year, Convention Members elected two clergy and two laypeople to serve on the Standing Committee.

The slate featured four clergy nominees: the Rev. Rod Gordon, the Rev. Laura Minnick Lockey, the Rev. Justin McIntosh, and the Rev. Colleen Schiefelbein. Lockey was elected on the first ballot. Gordon was elected on the third ballot.

The slate of lay candidates included Harry Dickinson, James Dinan, and Deborah Gandy. Dickinson and Gandy were elected.

Meet Me in Galilee Award: Carolyn Lanier

Following the elections, the Convention recognized and thanked the members of the Truth and Reparations Task Force, both outgoing and incoming, for their dedicated service. The atmosphere was one of appreciation for the hard work and ministry of those involved in these important roles. Carolyn Lanier was this year's recipient of the Meet Me in Galilee Award, which recognizes outstanding ministry in the field of racial justice and healing.

She dedicated the award to her parents who raised her at St. Philip's Episcopal Church, where she is an active member, and taught her about Jesus and the power of prayer.

"This work requires a lot of prayer," said Lanier, who has chaired the Ministry for Racial Justice and Healing for the Diocese of Virginia. "I'm grateful to all of you and for the work that you're doing in your churches and parishes. It can be hard. It can be frustrating. But when we work together, even though our pacing and our desire for things to move more quickly may be differently, when we work together and when we persevere, we know that the Holy Spirit's going to prevail."

Shrine Mont Camps Leadership Honored

The leadership of Shrine Mont Camps, past and present, was honored with a standing ovation.

"Shrine Mont camps has been blessed by an extraordinary lineage of directors, each one bringing unique gifts, deep faith and steadfast commitment to the formation of

children, youth, and young adults across the Diocese of Virginia,” Bishop Stevenson said.

“These directors have done far more than manage counselors or plan programs. They have shaped lives. They have nurtured faith. They have built communities of grace, joy and belonging to continue to ripple outward across our church today.

“Thank you for your leadership and for your profound, profound ministry. Thank you for helping thousands of campers discover that God’s love is both playful and profound. “

The Shrine Mont Camps Directors are honored on a new plaque that will hang in the Virginia House at Shrine Mont.

The three former camp directors who were present placed hands on Greg Randall, the new camps director, as he was installed.

Pictured, left to right, are Mary Beth Abplanalp, Paris Ball, Greg Randall, and Ken Malcom.

General Convention Deputies Elected

Delegates used electronic voting to determine deputies to the triannual General Convention, which is the governing body of the Episcopal Church and meets every three years. Each diocese elects deputies (four clergy and four lay) and alternates at least 12 months before the next General Convention (July 3-8, 2027, in Phoenix).

General Convention sets mission priorities, budget, policies, and approves changes to the church’s constitution and canons. The House of Deputies and the House of Bishops are bicameral like the US Congress.

Clergy deputies elected: The Rev. Will Dickinson, The Rev. Amanda Kotval, The Rev. Santiago Rodriguez, and The Rev. Deacon Nancy Searby.

Lay deputies elected: Mary Beth Abplanalp, Karen Franklin, Russ Randle, and Cindi Bartol.

Clergy deputy alternates: The Rev. Sven vanBaars (1), The Rev. Kathleen Murray (2), The Rev. Brian Vélez Garcia (3), and The Rev. David Rose (4).

Lay deputy alternates: Russell Lockey (1), Margaret “Mickey” Jones (2), and Max Sims (3).

Pathways to Prayer and Practice Video

Convention Members watched a video about children, worship, and the Pathways to Prayer and Practice initiative. This five-year ministry project funded by the Lilly Endowment aims to innovate, increase and improve worship for and with children up to age 10.

“We’re dealing with a generation that if we don’t start while they’re small, by the time they get older, half the time we’ve already lost them, and this is an opportunity to begin to speak to them,” said Canon for Discipleship, The Rev. Ricardo Sheppard.

The video features conversation with him and Pathways to Prayer and Practice Grant Director Tyler Henderson.

J. P. Causey Jr., Chair of the Committee on Constitutions and Canons, shared the committee report including recommendations and adoptions of C-1 through C-6.

Amendments to the Constitution and Canons

[Constitution and Canons Committee Report](#) **[Spanish Version](#)**

C-1 Amendments to the Constitution **[Second Reading with Attachment](#)** **[Spanish Version](#)**

C-2 Amendments to the Constitution **[First Reading](#)**

C-3 Amendments to Canons **[Read](#)**

C-4 Amendment to Article III.1(e) **[First Reading](#)** **[Spanish Version](#)**

C-5 Amend Canon 2 to add Section 7 **[Read](#)** **[Spanish Version](#)**

C-5a Amend Canon 2 to add Section 7 **[Read](#)**

C-6 A Resolution Supporting Youth Delegates to Diocesan Convention **[Read](#)**

Resolutions

Resolutions

[Report of the Resolutions Committee](#) **[\(Spanish Version\)](#)**

[R-1 Church Calendar Additions](#) **[\(Spanish Version\)](#)**

R-2 Birthright Citizenship
(Spanish Version)

R-3 Support for Immigrants and Refugees

R-3a Support for Immigrants and Refugees (Amended)

R-4 Crisis in Sudan

Resolution to Stand with Immigrants Passes

The legislative session continued as the Resolutions Committee presented two substantial resolutions, including R3, “Commending Study of the Episcopal Church’s Policy on Immigration and Refugee Issues and Consideration of New Ministries to Support Immigrants and Our Latine Members, Congregations, and Neighbors.”

An amendment to R3, brought forward by collegiate delegates, proposed that the Diocese formally adopt a policy of non-compliance with ICE and related enforcement agencies, except when legally required.

Multiple speakers shared personal stories and emphasizing the church’s responsibility to protect and stand with marginalized communities. University of Virginia student Jack Martinez, who is Mexican American, said the resolution would signal diocesan support to churches with policy of non-compliance:

“It is the responsibility as an institution, this church, to stand up for we who are being persecuted right now... in the face of people that want to scare you into being silent and to scare you into thinking that you’re isolated, to be able to say as a community and as a group all together that no, we are not afraid of you and we are going to support each other and show that we can take care of our communities and that we are going to stand up for our congregants who are Latino and who are people of color.”

The amendment passed as R3a, and the Bishop commended the young adults who led the effort. The session highlighted the church’s commitment to justice, inclusion, and active support for vulnerable populations.

The convention considered and adopted Resolution R4, which calls for prayer and action in response to ongoing massacres and civil war in Sudan. The Diocese of Virginia has a long-standing partnership with the church in Sudan, including support for clinics, schools, and congregations. The resolution urges congregations, individuals, and the Bishop should reach out to the Sudanese church and diaspora during this crisis.

Courtesy Resolutions

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CR-1: The Rev. Dr. Jerome Woods Berryman

[CR-2: Jack and Nancy Schick](#)

[CR-3 Jeffrey and Doris Guenther](#)

[CR-4 The Rev. Andrew T.P. Merrow](#)

[CR-5 Lois Tapscott](#)

[CR-6 Thelma Moomaw](#)

[CR-6a Thelma Moomaw](#)

2026 Budget Presented and Approved

The 2026 diocesan budget was presented and approved (\$6,967,921, an increase of \$438,921 or 6.3% over 2025). It is a balanced budget that was reviewed in an open hearing in October and no changes were made.

Budget growth is driven by increased support for youth programs (camping and campus ministries), racial reconciliation, and mission congregations. Staffing costs are up due to a full staff, including three bishops, all at full-year rates. Cat Turner from Church of the Resurrection, Alexandria, chaired the Committee on Budget, which noted positive trends in congregational health and engagement, with more parishes meeting the 10% covenantal giving mark.

Diocesan Treasurer Ted Smith reported on financial health, investment performance, and ongoing challenges with health insurance administration for clergy and lay employees. The diocese's net assets increased, with most gains from restricted grants and unrealized investment returns.

The treasurer commended staff and volunteers for their work, especially in managing camp finances and supporting diocesan operations.

Sine Die

Bishop Stevenson delivered a final blessing invoking peace and God's presence and [officially adjourned](#) the 231st Annual Convention of the Diocese of Virginia.

Next up: The 232nd Annual Convention of the Diocese of Virginia will be held at the Fredericksburg Convention Center on Nov. 5-7, 2026.