

By the Rev. John Ohmer

One irony of the General Convention is that the House of Bishops is more representative of the folks back home than the House of Deputies.

Conventional wisdom is that the House of Deputies, made up of lay people and local clergy who have to stand for re-election every three years, has the pulse of the people back home. Thus the cacophonous, sometimes raucous nature of the House of Deputies as diverse constituencies battle it out in a Convention Center of ideas.

Meanwhile, the thinking goes, the House of Bishops, made up of men and women who are elected to serve, even in retirement, until death, gather in carpeted, quieted rooms voting their consciences at round tables, secure in

the knowledge they can ride out an unpopular vote back home.

But the reality is different. Because deputies want to be here – indeed often campaign to get here – they are most likely to be advocates who care deeply about the issues that come before General Convention. And it's *deputies* who are freer to get out ahead of the folks back home on those issues: Generally speaking, clergy deputies go back to familiar and friendly local congregations, while lay deputies jump back into their day jobs among people who've never heard of General Convention.

Bishops, though, are required to be here, whether they give a hoot about General Con-

vention and its issues or not. And afterwards – and for the next three years – they're the ones going to coffee hours, friendly and hostile, all over the diocese, trying to explain General Convention's actions. Therefore, ironically, it's *bishops* who are often the most in touch with, and more accountable to, the pulse of the people back home.

The founders of the General Convention were wise to set up a bicameral legislature: one to ride the wings of the spirit, "lead where it will, cost what it may," and another to carefully reflect the will of the people.

They'd just be surprised now to find out which house is doing which.

## A Chat with Bonnie Anderson

By Ed Jones

So what did the Archbishop of Canterbury and the president of the House of Deputies talk about over dinner last week?

We can't say for sure. But Bonnie Anderson, the Deputies president, told *Center Aisle* that they would be more likely to chat about the halibut than the future of the Anglican Communion.

It's a reflection of how she sees her job.



"I'm not the single voice" of the House, she says. Her mission is to ensure that all deputies have the chance to speak clearly and freely on issues before Convention.

In a wide-ranging conversation with *Center Aisle*, Ms. Anderson talked about topics ranging from media coverage to her relationship with the Presiding Bishop. Along the way, she said that:

—She thinks deputies should come to Convention with open minds. That's why she felt the "Committee of the Whole" discussions might have an impact on the House's handling of issues related to human sexuality.

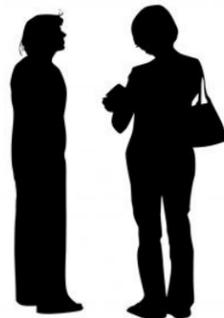
—She and Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori are not in disagreement over how to handle B033, the compromise resolution on human sexuality from 2006. The Presiding Bishop was quoted as saying Convention should not repeal B033. But Ms. Anderson says that doesn't mean the resolution should not be discussed.

—The Episcopal Church's ties to the Anglican Communion are a high priority for her. She referred to the six special guests she has invited to Convention from Ghana, Brazil, Canada, Kenya, South Africa and New Zealand.

—The Archbishop of Canterbury should be taken "at his word" when he says he has no hidden agendas. The president said she could "identify with that" in terms of having her own statements parsed for meaning.

—The mainstream media "make more out" of controversies in the church than they should and often "miss the big points."

**Committee Open Hearings**  
**Structure**, 7:30 a.m., 10 min., Hilton California Ballroom, D094  
**World Mission**, 7:30 a.m., Hilton Huntington, 10 min., C087, D072, D073, D075  
**National/International Concerns**, 7:30 a.m., 15 min., Hilton Laguna A, B027, B028, B031, D059, D060, D076, D076, D084, D088  
**Social/Urban Affairs**, 7:30 a.m., 15 min., Hilton Capistrano, D071, D090, D095  
**Church in Small Communities**, 8 a.m., 5 min., Hilton Sam Simeon, B030



"I think from day three it is impossible to say what the most important thing that we will accomplish will be because by the time next Friday, or even in the next three years ensuing, and looking back on this Convention, the most important thing, from where I stand at the moment, may appear to be something relatively minor."

—Josey Nickels, Diocese of Wyoming, Lay Deputy

## Talk of the Town

What's the most important thing you hope General Convention will do before it ends on Friday?

"The most important thing, I hope, is [that] they will accomplish a uniting around mission and a clear vision for our future, get past the divineness and be united in moving forward."

—Marty Field, Diocese of Eastern Michigan, Clergy Deputy

"Well, as dean of St. Matthew's Cathedral in Dallas, where over half my members are Latinos or Hispanic members, I will hope that we will strongly endorse D038, which is a resolution . . . on evangelism among Latinos and Hispanic people and a strong financial commitment to make that work."

—Kevin Martin, Diocese of Dallas, Clergy Deputy



### Center Aisle

"The middle is not the midpoint on a line between two extremes. In the life of faith, the great bulk of people are at the center, and that center is faith in the Risen Christ."  
—The Rt. Rev. Peter James Lee, Bishop of Virginia

Center Aisle is an opinion journal offered by the Diocese of Virginia as a gift to General Convention. We offer analysis and opinions from a variety of sources that reflect the transformational center of our Church.  
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## Perspective

### George Harrison at General Convention?

By the Rt. Rev. Shannon S. Johnston, Bishop Coadjutor of Virginia

Having grown up in the 1960s and 1970s, I felt almost required to have a favorite Beatle; all of my friends did. Even back then, from the age of about 8, this was an easy choice for me: George Harrison—you know, the "spiritual" one of the Fab Four. I can't claim that I understood or even knew anything about Harrison's spirituality, but I certainly knew that there was something different about him.

Years later, I came to understand that George went deeper, exploring and tapping into his spirituality. And it showed, both in himself and in his relationship to others.

Of the many songs that Harrison wrote as a Beatle, there is one in particular that keeps coming back to me over and over, year after year: "I Me Mine." As the title shows, this song protests against the classic problems of the self and ego. In material, economic and even spiritual aspects of our lives, we all too easily revert to our default mode: competition and "me first." This is no less true in our relationships as well, especially so in our less intimately personal "communal" relationships, such as the larger Church. And, as we now see so painfully, it is true in our relationships to Creation itself.

During the past several days here at General Convention, "I Me Mine" has been flooding my head and heart. At first, I didn't know why it suddenly came to me and then would not go away. But then, as days passed and conversations built one upon the other, the reasons why the song was staying with me so insistently became clear. It's going on all around us! It's in virtually every room or meeting we're in.

I—Me—Mine. How often could you and I say that it is true about ourselves? And how often have we seen this posture and heard it spoken this past week? To be sure,



it is equally true of left and right.

It's always about "I want my agenda to win out." When that happens, there is no true sensitivity or consideration of the other.

The cost to the other is slighted. The ending place of the other is disregarded. "Sure, I believe in what *Ubuntu* says. But we can't expect to take all of that too far right from the start. After we win, then we secure the values of community and mutuality."

This is never the way of faithful discipleship of our Lord Jesus when we are seeking the way ahead for Christ's Church. The fundamental truth of *Ubuntu*, "I am because we are," is essentially a way of living out the Golden Rule. And so, when we violate the spirit of *Ubuntu* with "I Me Mine," we don't just find ourselves at cross-purposes with a Convention theme. We do nothing less than violence to the Body of Christ. None of us has that in our hearts, and so we pray for the grace to be the people Jesus Christ has called us to be for one another.

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Pick up a paper copy around the hotels and Convention Center every morning.

## Editorial

### Too Big for a Bumper Sticker

The Episcopal Church has a problem: It's not "newsy" enough.

How could that be, you ask? Doesn't our 2.2 million-member Church make headlines every three years with its debates on human sexuality?

Yes it does—and that's the problem.

The real story of our community of faith is broader and more nuanced than verbal jousts over controversial resolutions. It's the story of church members working in soup kitchens and traveling on mission trips to developing countries. It's the tale of young people inspired by a church camp experience to begin a spiritual journey.

But these stories are not the stuff of Page 1.

In a media world biased toward confrontation, in a political culture shaped by polarization, it's hard for a Church like ours to tell its story. Far too often, the general public knows us by our disagreements and lawsuits.

And the pity of it is that we have a fantastically good story to tell.

From Quito to Fairbanks, from Taipei to Firenze, from rustic missions in the Appalachians to magnificent edifices in Manhattan, the Episcopal Church has grown from an establishment church into a diverse community of faith. You know we've been on a journey when the world's average Anglican, demographically speaking, is an African woman.

So what's to be done?

First, there's the question of internal communications. The plan to turn the national Church newspaper, *Episcopal Life*, into a quarterly journal has sparked strong resistance from those who fear an important communications tool will be marginalized. There are resolutions calling for a further survey of reader habits (D034) and a restructuring of the *Episcopal Life* board (D037).

**EDITORIAL**, continued on Page 3

## Letters to the Editor

### More Pressing Issues

In regard to your editorial, "Shh. . . We're Listening," hear, hear.

This is not time to negate B033, though it appears that there may be an overwhelming impetus building to do so. I'm not sure that the "rank and file, via media" members of the Diocese of Virginia can swallow that. I place myself in that rank and file.

I trust that Bishop Lee, Bishop Johnston and Bishop Jones are watching this very carefully. As one of the largest dioceses in the Episcopal Church, we should be able to wield some influence. I would hope that some work is being done and some attention is paid to some issues somewhat more pressing than the libido, i.e., those issues Jesus names in Matthew 25:31-46. Example: What is the Episcopal Church's response to Pope Benedict's new encyclical "Caritas in Veritate," which focuses on issues of social and economic justice?

—Mike Foughty, Diocese of Virginia

### "Rachel's Tears, Hannah's Hope"

Thank you for pointing us toward the liturgy, "Rachel's Tears, Hannah's Hope." It is a beautifully and thoughtfully crafted liturgical resource that will be an incredible aid to the Church's pastoral ministry of hope and healing. I know this need both through my work as a priest and as a father of two daughters who has also experienced the heartbreak of a pregnancy not going to term. "Rachel's Tears, Hannah's Hope" highlights just one way General Convention is helping the Episcopal Church move forward in ministry.

—Keith Emerson, Diocese of Southern Virginia

## A Different Kind of Passage

By Thomas Eaves, Matthew Lukens, the Rev. John Ohmer and the Rev. Lauren R. Stanley

The House of Deputies' overwhelming passage of D025, dealing with the consecration of bishops, took place in an atmosphere markedly different from the critical debates at Conventions past.

Anxiety did not seem to be part of the equation this time. Some deputies admitted to not realizing the vote would take place yesterday; others said they were ready to trust the World Mission Committee and its work.

"I have enormous respect for the World Mission Committee as well as the vote for D025 by the House of Deputies," Russell V. Palmore Jr., deputy, Virginia, said. "I believe the General Convention has benefited greatly from the Listening Process."

The Very Rev. Dr. Philip C. Linder, deputy, Upper South Carolina, and member of the World Mission Committee, said he was "very pleased with the vote." It "shows the thought that went into it. It's an honest statement of where we are as a Church. I believe that it actually accentuates the fact that we are Anglican, living in the midst of gray areas. This empowers us to move forward with the mission and ministry God gives us."

Linder cautioned that Church leaders "need to present this in a way that positively speaks to who we are. It gives us the energy to move forward."

The Very Rev. Charles L. Holt, deputy, Central Florida, who was active in the debate yesterday, said that his problem "with the resolution is that it's ambiguous, and the problem with ambiguity is that it further fractures the right, which moves the middle of our church."

"B033 was the most effective thing the church's progressives could have done," Mr. Holt said, "because it split the conservatives into two, both in the Episcopal Church and within the conservative side of the Anglican Communion. . . . That means we've failed as a church to verbalize a consensus position that keeps everyone at the table. When we're ambiguous, we cause that kind of damage to the body of Christ."

The Rev. Susan Russell, president of Integrity, said that she felt "deeply encouraged" and called D025's passage a "strong statement from the House of Deputies. I heard Deputy Snow from Alaska talk about the Archbishop of Canterbury's words, how there is no unity without truth. [D025 is] showing both truth and unity. I hope the bishops will take heart and concur."

"It means this is a Church that is together . . . strong and faithful. Let's hold together and move forward as a Church in 2009."

The Rev. Judy Parrish, alternate deputy, Southwestern Virginia, said: "It's about time we included everybody."

## Living With Unfinished Business and Unresolved Questions

By the Rev. Susan Eaves

Ray Suarez' comment during his sermon on Saturday that we will soon be a nation "where the majority would be minorities" has stayed with me. I looked around God's gathered people (still predominantly white) and for a moment envisioned the same gathering as a fulfillment of Suarez's vision.

And I felt a moment of fear. Would I have a place in such a world? Would the things dear to me still be valued and observed? What would it be like to experience myself as a minority in every sense of the word? As an immigrant myself, could I stand the work of going through yet another paradigm shift? Committee 12 on Evangelism, on which I serve, has been as much concerned with the "who" as the "what." We have spent long hours inspecting every resolution to ensure no one is left out. Each resolution is as significant in terms of the group addressed as the action proposed.

The Evangelism Committee envisions a world as God wills it to be: a place where all are welcome and where an empty space at the table is a source of sorrow. We already know that such work is not easy; we already know



there will be times when it will seem simply impossible. To doubt that is to ignore our current struggling over issues of human sexuality. That's just one of the issues we are facing when we imagine a world rich in human relationships.

Yet we can be filled with hope. One of the great gifts of the Spirit to Episcopalians is our capacity to live with unfinished business and unresolved questions. We are less concerned about a tidy world and clarity than we are about exercising our God-given gifts of loving the Christ and being the Christ for those we serve.

We readily admit we don't have all the answers and, while that can be frustrating, it is also the gift that helps us participate in God's creation with sincere hearts. We are a people of a living faith and we are in the business of working things out.

Our confidence that we will have the grace and the strength to do God's will and to try again if we don't get it quite right is well

founded for " . . . as rain and snow fall from the heavens and return not again, but water the earth, bringing forth life and giving growth, seed for sowing and bread for eating, so is my word that goes forth from my mouth; it will not return to me empty; but it will accomplish that which I have purposed, and prosper in that for which I sent it."

*EDITORIAL, continued from Page 1*

What's really needed is a collegial approach to navigating the print-to-Web trends—a collaboration among national, diocesan and parish communicators that can strengthen the national voice of the Church without sacrificing the needs of smaller dioceses.

But the toughest communications challenge for the Church is to get the word out to those who aren't in the pews. To do that, we all need to become better storytellers. Whether it's sending a notice to your hometown paper about an adult forum or chatting with a sleepy friend in the morning carpool, we need to rise above our reticence and realize that the Episcopal Church has a wonderful story to tell. It's positive, interesting and nuanced. And it doesn't fit on a bumper sticker.

## OffCenter



## Center Aisle



Bishop Lee



Ed Jones



Emily Cherry



John Ohmer



Lauren Stanley

**Center Aisle:** Published by the Diocese of Virginia; The Rt. Rev. Peter James Lee, Bishop Editor; Ed Jones; **Managing Editor:** Emily Cherry; **Lead Writers:** The Rev. John Ohmer; The Rev. Lauren R. Stanley; **Staff Assistance/Contributors:** Henry Burt; Mike Kerr; Matt Farr; Tyler Fox; Matthew Lukens **Volunteers:** Charles Cowherd, Liz Cunningham, Thomas Eaves, Kate Hahn, Steve Van Voorhees

## Growing with Grace

By Beblon G. Parks

Beblon G. Parks, president of the Diocese of Virginia Episcopal Church Women, presented yesterday a workshop for ECW Triennial. "Getting it Together with Grace" is a lesson in stress management for today's busy church woman. Center Aisle figured that these same lessons would be particularly pertinent for all General Convention attendees today, as we dive in to the final five days of Convention.



Family, home, work, church, community: the list of "to do's" and "take care of's" for today's church woman is ever expanding. While she may want to just bury her head in a pillow and ignore it all, she doesn't. Instead, she trudges along, praying that she will "get it all together." Before getting it together, though, she needs to take a little time reflecting on what's pulling her apart and in what directions. Those "pulls and tugs" are the stressors of life. The causes are many, from lifestyles and life-changing

events to beliefs and behaviors. The results can literally be fatal—unless she decides to take some positive steps to reduce or control them.

The first step is to recognize the impact these stressors have on the body and spirit. Often, she doesn't associate that stiff neck, nagging cough, angry outburst, exhaustion or other illusive ailments with that illusive culprit—stress. But once the association is made, her next step is to do something about it. Engaging in "stress busters" will go a long way in helping to "get it together."

### Beblon's Top 10 Tips for Managing Stress On The Move

1. Breath deeply
2. Think positively.
3. Exercise regularly.
4. Plan for change.
5. Rest adequately.
6. Grow continuously.
7. Laugh frequently.

8. Love yourself and others.
9. Meditate daily.
10. Socialize regularly.

Today's church woman can also "arrest the stress" with GRACE: When she takes time to be **Generous** with herself and others and acknowledge the gifts for which she should be **Grateful**, she's on her way to getting it together. As she **Reflects** on the positives and not the negatives of life, she develops the **Resilience** that helps her "bounce back" after setbacks and disappointments.

The more her **Awareness** is raised of the benefits of **Active Worship and Prayer**, the more her spirituality and faith will sustain and propel her. As she learns that to **Care** for herself is a "good thing," she will learn the benefits of **Empowering** herself and others to take control of the life being lived . . . moment to moment and day by day, and having fun along the way!

This holistic approach to stress management addresses the physical, mental, spiritual, intellectual and social aspects of life.