

By the Rev. John Ohmer

Today I took an hour or so and went through the notebook I've been carrying since I got here. In no particular order, some thoughts:

- Has anyone else noticed that the Holy Spirit moves powerfully through the hall each morning at the time communion is distributed?
- There are more smiling faces at the Episcopal Relief & Development's free-coffee-sample booth than anywhere else here.
- It's around this time that my homesickness peaks and my patience with others plummets. If that's widely shared, it's a good time for prayer and solitude, and a bad time to make important decisions.
- Speaking of which: Why doesn't General Convention practice what we preach and ob-

More Attacks, More Prayers

Bishop Pierre Whalen, Churches in Europe, asked bishops to pray for the victims of church bombings in Iraq on Sunday. In Baghdad, six churches were attacked; two children and two adults were killed. In Mosul, one church was bombed, with no fatalities. One was killed in an attack in Kirkuk.

Bishop Whalen told his colleagues about the Association to Support Minorities in the East, the refugee program he helped create in France. Candidates are vetted, and receive long-stay visas for 10 years in France. "We want them to go back," he said. "While they bring a distinctiveness to our culture, Christians tend to be the most educated Iraqis and are essential to the rebuilding of the country."

French President Nicholas Sarkozy has been instrumental in increasing the numbers of refugees allowed into France, Bishop Whalen said. "He started at 500, then went to 1,000 and now we're up to 10,000."

The Man Behind the Coats

By the Rev. Lauren R. Stanley



Will Mr. Secretary accomplish the goal of wearing a different jacket every day?

Two deputies, Charlie Holt, Central Florida, and Morris Thompson, Lexington, are keeping track *and* naming the jackets worn by the Rev. Dr. Gregory S. Straub, executive officer and

serve Sabbath rest?

- What the budget committee got right was that we need to prune the national Church structure, and that the right tool for the job is a chainsaw, not hand-held loppers. What they got wrong is that they are still trying to make the horseshoe factory of General Convention and 815 more efficient and responsive so that horseshoes are more affordable for local congregations. Most of us switched over to automobiles a few years ago.
- Note to Bishop Steven Charleston: Prophets are not self-referential; they are God-and-God's-will referential; remove all instances of the first person singular in your sermon, and 10 minutes will be plenty of time to deliver the

Discerning & Gently Debating

By the Rev. Lauren R. Stanley

Time to understand 'all'

All baptized persons shall have full access to the discernment process, if C061 as amended by Bishops makes it through Deputies. The change to positively toned language also drops all references to termination of ordination process due to personal identities.

Because, as Bishop Cathy Roskam, Suffragan of New York, pointedly said: "What is it about 'all' that we don't understand?" The amended resolution guarantees access to the process, but not to ordination.

Indaba leads to new C056

The *Indaba* conversations were "one of the holiest moments" of General Convention, in which "we want to share and shoulder one another's burdens," said the Rt. Rev. Gene Robinson, New Hampshire.

During gentle debate, Bishop Robinson

secretary of the General Convention.

Their sobriquets: 1. Psycho Green; 2. Colorful Madras; 3. "You Are My Sunshine" Plaid; 4. Yellow Plaid Variation on a Theme; 5. Bubblegum Pink; 6. "Vote Me Up Or Down" Stripes; 7. "Strike-out" Stripes; and 8. "Tickle Me" Tartan.

Mr. Secretary, who won't reveal such sartorial secrets as the number of eye-catching jackets and ties he owns, does admit to buying the first day's jacket, a Ralph Lauren (and not a Lily Pulitzer, as many suspected), specifically for General Convention while in Hong Kong (for

important, powerful message God has given you.

- What do the MDGs and – for better or worse – resolutions about same-sex blessings and gay bishops have in common? In those cases, the Episcopal Church is out front and visionary. *That's* what draws people to those hearings: They are Joel 2:28 moments, times when our sons and daughters prophesy, old men dream dreams, young men see visions.
- Until today's Eucharist, I had never seen a priest play a xylophone. Nor have I ever heard that instrument played so passionately and beautifully. Thanks, xylophone-playing-priest, whoever you are.

and others urged inclusion of the development of liturgical resources. "If at some point we were to have such liturgies, what would they look like? What are we looking at? We would not be dealing with everyone's fantasy, but have some examples."

The Rt. Rev. Robert Fitzpatrick, Hawaii, in urging discharge of C056, said, "The legislative process can be a way in which the Church moves. But there are also times when it's better to be silent. ... This may not be the time to act."

The Rt. Rev. William Gregg, Assistant Bishop of North Carolina, said that in the *Indaba* discussions, "one of the things we wanted to do is give sense of movement, to frame it, design it, to frame the content in a way that most of us can at least be reasonably comfortable in taking it home."

95 percent off!). He nearly shuddered with horror at the idea of wearing a vertically striped shirt with a vertically striped jacket, instead confidently mixing and matching his colorful patterns.

Each day, deputies, visitors and all with discerning eyes wait to see what Mr. Secretary will wear on the dais. His fear: If he repeats a jacket, the deputies may leave the floor, so we won't be dazzled by Psycho Green again, alas!

Another little-known fact: Mr. Secretary writes discerning and scintillating reviews for cruisecritic.com!

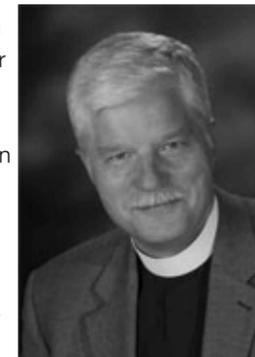


"The middle is not the midpoint on a line between two extremes. In the life of faith, the great bulk of people are at the center, and that center is faith in the Risen Christ."
—The Rt. Rev. Peter James Lee, Bishop of Virginia

Perspective

Real Outreach, Mission Rhetoric

By the Rev. Canon Titus Presler



Mission has been remarkably center stage at the 76th General Convention. The Anglican Communion's Five Marks of Mission have been endorsed, three convention-wide Mission Conversations

have occurred, there's support for international missionaries, the Strategic Vision for Reaching Latinos/Hispanics has gained traction, and lots of other initiatives are underway.

Is this mission commitment real or rhetorical, engaged or nominal? I'm encouraged by the real engagement that is clear all over the place.

Debates over consents to episcopal elections in relation to B033 from the 2006 General Convention have highlighted mission. Opponents of D025 from 2009 expressed concern that international mission with Anglican companions will be endangered, and supporters have celebrated how they've been able to engage in local and global mission while staying connected with companions around the Communion. So while the two sides differ in assessing mission prospects, both see nurturing mission as a central concern. That's progress.

The Mission Conversations that have been guided by Public Narrative have focused on real mission rather than fuzzy concepts that absorb everything into mission. Conversation facilitators didn't define mission, but people very naturally shared stories that highlighted reaching beyond comfort zones to encounter and work with

communities different from their own, which is the mark of mission. In my group, these included work with people hit by the economic meltdown, issues around a homeless person sheltering on church property, and Solo Flight, a ministry for single adults. Reaching out in this variety of ways is progress.

Past tension between local and global mission seems to have subsided. People committed to mission in the United States very much affirm the concern of those committed to mission abroad. The old refrain, "Yes, but what about our own back yard?" is less frequent. Equally, world mission enthusiasts are affirming the importance of mission at home. Many people are involved in both and have learned that the local enhances the global and vice versa. This is pretty appropriate for a church whose corporate identity is the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society!

And then there's been good mission inspiration from speakers. The presiding bishop's two sermons have been models of mission vision, and her image of mission as the Church's heartbeat was memorable enough for Resolution D075 to highlight it for the Church. Bishop Michael Curry's single-

PERSPECTIVE continued on Page 2

Voices from Convention

"In D025 this General Convention has sought above all to speak the truth to itself and to its Anglican Communion partners. As followers of the way of Jesus, we are seeking the truth, come whence it may, cost what it will."

—Randy Dales, Deputy, New Hampshire, Vice Chair, Committee on World Mission

Correction

Center Aisle misspelled Abigail Nelson's name in yesterday's issue, and apologizes for that error.

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.
www.centeraisle.net

Editorial

Moments of Grace

At almost every General Convention, just when the doomsayers are predicting that all is lost, a moment of grace appears—a time when the Church demonstrates yet again how inspiring a community of faith can be.

We came close to such a moment yesterday.

In a spirit of generosity, the Bishops gave consideration to discharging—in effect, rejecting—Resolution C056 on same-gender blessings. That option would have allowed discussion and reflection outside the legislative process. Had the discharge been approved, Bishops would have given "breathing space" to those concerned about Convention's earlier decision to open the ordination process to all, including gays and lesbians.

But the motion to discharge failed, leading to the Bishops' 104-to-30 approval (with two abstentions) of a substitute C056. And though we have concerns about how that proposal will be received by the Anglican Communion, it is a significant improvement on the original resolution.

Indeed, the new C056 is a spiritual step forward in several ways.

The proposal was spawned by an *Indaba* process—the unifying approach of sharing and reflecting that was practiced at the 2008 Lambeth Conference. Twenty-six bishops from across the theological spectrum participated in discussions.

EDITORIAL continued on Page 2

Stay in Touch with Center Aisle

Centeraisle.net is your source for the opinions coming out of Convention that reflect the Church's transformational center. View YouTube videos, send us an e-mail, or read blog posts from our youth volunteers. Discover some new exhibitors, read some restaurant reviews, join our Facebook page, follow our Twitter account—be a part of *Center Aisle*.

Letters to the Editor

Judging from the story in yesterday's Richmond Times-Dispatch, it seems that we should, fairly soon hear news of "The Great Divorce."

Evidently we've decided that remaining a part of the worldwide Anglican Communion is no longer as important as our own agenda. I'm wondering if anyone might want to address the possible consequences, or if anyone even thought of the consequences before they acted.

I know we only get the sensational side of the story from the secular press, but this seems to be a fairly serious breach of what's been expected of us.

The Very Rev. S. Paul Rowles
Diocese of Virginia

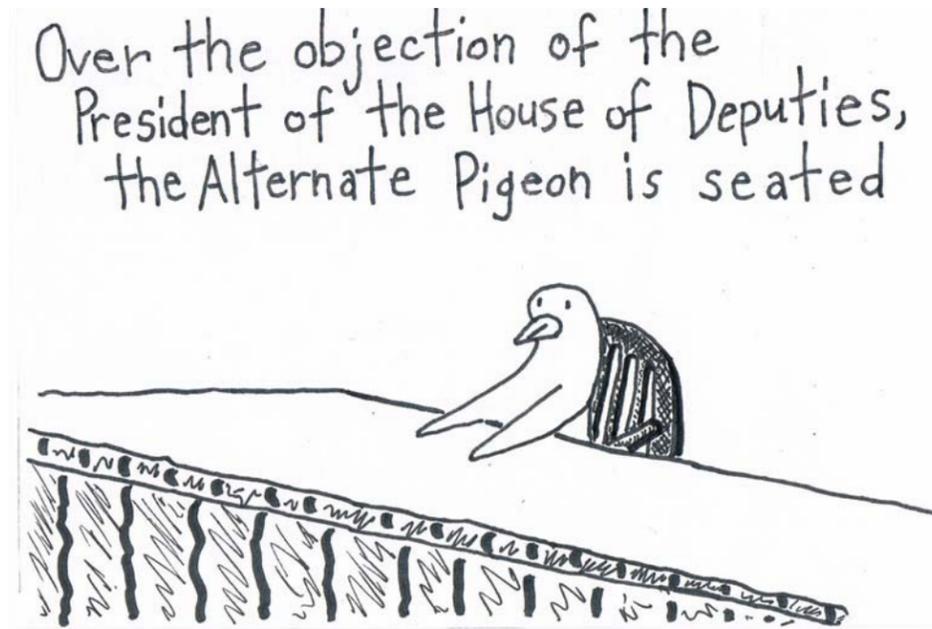
I am concerned with the placid tone of your reporting from the General Convention. Your coverage gives the impression that the decisions made by the Episcopal leadership are not controversial in anyway.

From what I have read and heard, the Convention's actions are controversial within the pews of the Episcopal Church, at Canterbury, and throughout the Anglican Communion. Ignoring disagreement does not promote unity or inclusiveness, but instead it makes congregants opposed to the Convention's decisions feel voiceless, excluded, and unwelcome.

Nathaniel S. Morrison
Diocese of Virginia

OffCenter

Several pigeons decided to make their home in the House of Deputies over the course of General Convention, begging the question: Were these dove-like birds symbols of the Holy Spirit? Or just feathered friends with great ambitions?



Cartoon: Mike Kerr

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

PERSPECTIVE continued from Page 1

word charge – "Go!" – to the Episcopal Church Women was galvanizing. The sermons by Courtney Cowart on post-Katrina ministry and Abigail Nelson on ERD's work with the MDGs were clearly mission-focused and arose out of real and costly engagement with the world.

In addition to all this, there's been an excellent balance among in-house projects, like the revision of the disciplinary canons, genuine mission initiatives, and the ramifications of inter-Anglican turmoil. This convention cannot be accused of obsessing about sex, or hiding conflict behind mission, or turning inward in a time of financial pressure. Excellent balance has been undergirded by a consistent outward focus on mission. That's good news for the Church. More important, it's good news for the world.

The Rev. Canon Titus Presler, Th.D., D.D., is a missiologist with experience in parish ministry, international mission and theological education.

EDITORIAL continued from Page 1

The resulting resolution, now on its way to Deputies, authorizes the collection and development of theological and liturgical resources for same-gender blessings. But in an important change from the original, these resources will come back to the next Convention for "consideration," not necessarily for "action." The deletion of that latter word offers a helpful bit of latitude.

The new introductory resolve, which came from the *Indaba* group, makes clear that the development of these resources would come in the context of a changing legal landscape in the United States. Several jurisdictions have made same-gender marriages, unions and partnerships legal. This trend calls for a renewed pastoral response that, as the resolution notes in a wonderful touch of Anglican ambiguity, may be "generous."

C056 also calls for this work to proceed in "an open process" that could include our Communion partners. That's particularly important given the expected fallout from the passage of D025, which deals with the open ordination process.

Finally, C056 honors "the theological diversity of this Church"--a trait that has been on display throughout this Convention in moments of contention and in moments of grace.

Learn more about Resolution C056 on Page 4.

Too Many Words

By the Rev. Dr. Robert Prichard

Opinions and positions from the deputation of the Diocese of Virginia



We have reached the point in convention when some bishops and deputies have begun to have dreams of brevity. If only fewer words were said or written, the pace of business might quicken. My own thoughts have turned in three directions; I offer them as a public service.

1) A limit on the number of resolutions per diocese might significantly reduce the workload. Most dioceses would be unaffected by such a provision for they submit very few resolutions. At this convention, for example, 69 of the 110 dioceses submitted no resolutions at all, and

another 30 introduced only one or two. A combination of four dioceses, however, introduced one-third of all "C" resolutions. A rule limiting submissions to no more than two per diocese would inconvenience a few and bring substantial relief to many.

2) A limit on resolutions would not have any appreciable effect on the committees, commissions, agencies and boards of the Episcopal Church for they seem able to craft individual resolutions that are hundreds of pages in length. A weight or word limit might be in order. Perhaps one of our senior bishops or deputies could craft a new canon that would limit CCABs to submitting no more than one pound of resolutions or no proposals with

more words than a Sunday issue of *The New York Times*.

3) Another solution has been making the rounds at Convention this year: the idea that Convention might devise some equivalent to the life-time maximum benefits of the health insurance companies. Each bishop and deputy might be given a life-time maximum number of words for use on the convention floor, after which time the person would retain seat and vote, but would have to pay out of pocket for every word uttered. The removal of a few strategic voices might increase the pace of business in both Houses.

Biking for ERD

By the Rev. Lauren R. Stanley



Hollingsworth

Come this weekend, thousands of us will be scurrying from Anaheim, trying to get home as quickly as possible.

Not eight folks from Ohio. Led by the Rt. Rev. Mark Hollingsworth Jr., the Buck-

eyes will climb on their bicycles and spend the next 10 days riding 4,000 miles from Anaheim to New York City to raise money and awareness for Episcopal Relief and Development.

"We have to ride off highways," Bishop Hollingsworth said. "It will be a relay ride around the clock, with someone always riding."

In 2006, the bishop and others rode from Columbus to Cleveland. This year, his staff teased him: Why not ride across the domestic part of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society? That's when "Riding for Their Lives: Combating Malaria on Two Wheels" was born.

"We want to raise awareness of ERD as a mission arm of the Episcopal Church; ... funds for malaria prevention through the Nets-for-Life program of ERD," and find new people who might become lifelong contributors, Bishop Hollingsworth said.

"In spite of our love for cycling, this is a stretch for us and it's a mission stretch for us," he said, "and we hope to inspire a complementary mission stretch among our sisters and brothers in the Episcopal Church as they participate with us through contributions to ERD."

To support this mission, go to www.er-d.org or www.dohio.org and click on "ERD Bike Ride," or visit the ERD display booth in the exhibition hall.



Bad News and Good

By the Rev. Lauren R. Stanley

The proposed budget before General Convention is a mix of bad and good.

The overall bad news: \$23 million in cuts. One bit of good news: The Millennium Development Goals line item was restored. This budget, Presiding Bishop Katherine Jefferts Schori said, is "going to reflect the scarcity of our resources. ... To some of you, this will feel like a heart attack."

"But," she said, "the heartbeat will go on. ... Mission is the reason for our existence; mission is beyond ourselves. ..."

"This church, however, lives in eternal hope of the resurrection," she added. "We believe through grace that this church will emerge more able to respond to its vocation." She concluded by asking "for your creativity in responding to the realities" of a heavily trimmed budget.

"This budget asks the church to live within its means," PB&F Chair Pan Adams-McCaslin said. "We cannot spend what we will not give."

To ease some of the financial pain in tight economic times, the dioceses will be asked to give less toward the overall budget. A shorter General Convention in 2012 is being proposed; and approximately 30 Church staff will be cut.

"We believe that this budget is responsive to the Gospel, the voice of the convention and the economic realities of our time," the Rt. Rev. Andrew

Smith of Connecticut said.

The budget, like the economy, is not a pretty sight. Programs that many want to see continue will be cut; other programs will be consolidated, even when some of those combinations don't seem to make sense.

Details, Details

Deputies made a little mistake yesterday in turning back a late motion to suspend the Rules of Order. The rejection of that motion means that technically, according to the House of Deputies Rule 24 (page 209), no legislation that originated in Deputies and needs concurrence from Bishops can be considered, because we're now in the last two legislative days. The easiest way to fix this: Submit a new motion, different from the one that failed, so that Deputies' legislation indeed can be considered.

Bishops Remove GC consent

Bishops took away General Convention's consent to the election of bishops who have been elected within 120 days of Convention. B029 highlights Standing Committees' experience with consents and discernment, pointing out that many Convention deputies engage in consents only once every three years and thus change the tenor of the consent process. Because of modern communications, 120 days no longer are necessary, and Deputies should approve this as well.