

Members of General Convention will have a chance to share their commitment to mission and call each other into mission through the Episcopal Public Narrative Project.

“Public narrative is a discernment process,” according to the Rev. Michael Pipkin, coordinator for the Episcopal Public Narrative Project (EPNP) at General Convention. “I tell you my story, I connect it to the wider community story, and I tell you what I think we’re called to do about it right now. I call you to action ... We talk about values, choice points and what values underlie that choice. Those values connect with the wider community values.”

The process, said Mr. Pipkin, who is priest-in-charge of The Falls Church Episcopal Church in Falls Church, Va., is a “way to do mission.”

Four “Conversations on Mission” are scheduled during the 10 days of General Convention, beginning yesterday and continuing on Thursday, Saturday, and Monday.

“This is to get us to act,” Mr. Pipkin said. “When God called upon Moses, he used a form of public narrative. ... The EPNP process

is designed to get people out of introspection, identify an urgent need and then respond to that need. People are going to be asked to make a specific request” during the conversations.

Dr. Marshall Ganz, a lecturer in public policy at Harvard University’s Kennedy School and a consultant to the Joint Standing Commission on Planning and Arrangements, is one of the prime movers behind the public narrative process. In an Executive Council briefing on June 14, Dr. Ganz told part of his story, particularly his involvement in the civil rights movement of the 1960s, and the lessons about leadership he learned. In order to motivate people to work for change, he said, “the challenge is not simply to make a good argument” but to help people overcome inertia, fear, anxiety, self-doubt and isolation by inspiring hope, confidence, urgency and a sense of solidarity.

That, Dr. Ganz said, is where narratives – stories – come into play because people can connect more with the emotions of a story than with cognitive facts.

“You’re teaching people to preach, and you’re teaching people to preach in a way that

leads to meddling (for social good),” President Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori told Dr. Ganz at the briefing.

House of Deputies President Bonnie Anderson said the use of public narrative is aimed at “reactivating and enriching our mission call” as Episcopalians use their stories to learn more about who they are, learn who others are and learn what all are called to do because of their relationships and their values.

Mr. Pipkin looks at the project as a way of “fulfilling the Great Commission and the baptismal covenant, which calls us to participate in our community as well as to engage in the mission and ministry given to us by the Risen Lord.”

The Public Narrative Project asks participants “to share a part of their story, to listen, and to risk a bit of exposure of themselves” with a goal of doing mission, Mr. Pipkin said. It is “to help us figure out how we can do mission together.”

(Episcopal News Service contributed to this report.)

Leave Some Bucks, Help Some Lives

By the Rev. John Ohmer

When the Episcopal Church gathered in General Convention in Columbus, Ohio, in 2006, I wrote a column saying that while I’m in town I intend to be – in one small way – good news to the working poor.

Again this year in Anaheim, I invite you to join me.

Like many of you, I’m staying in a local hotel. I plan to leave \$5 on my nightstand each morning for the housekeeping staff.

By the time the General Convention is over next Friday, I will have left \$55. That’s not a big deal to me; much less than what I would have paid for airport parking.

It’s *really* not a big deal if I’m the only one doing it.

But do the math: Organizers of the General Convention expect to serve communion to 8,500 people, and have recruited 600 volunteers. Not all stay the whole time, of course, and not all spend the night in hotels.

So let’s take a conservative number and say 5,000 people are spending the night here

and let’s say they spend at least five nights.

If 5,000 people leave \$5 a night, we inject \$25,000 of cash directly into the hands of the working poor *each morning*; multiply that times five nights, and we give \$125,000 by the time we leave.



A less conservative (but completely possible) scenario: If those same 5,000 people leave \$5 a night for 10 nights, we inject *a quarter of a million dollars* into the working poor’s economy.

But more importantly, look at it from the perspective of a housekeeper: Housekeepers at the hotel I’m staying in clean 14 rooms a day. If each hotel guest on his or her floor left

\$5, that housekeeper would take home \$70 each day.

Even if the housekeeper is making \$12.50 an hour (\$4.50 an hour above California’s minimum wage of \$8 an hour), working eight hours a day, he or she would bring home almost as much *in our tips* as they are making in their wages. And if your housekeeper is making California’s minimum wage, we’re more than doubling their daily pay.

“Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I say?” Jesus asked. Actions speak louder than words, and this simple action – leaving five bucks on the nightstand each night – is a lot more meaningful and powerful than any carefully worded resolution affirming the poor or claiming solidarity with them.

So I’m leaving five bucks on the nightstand each morning. It’s a small price to pay to be good news to the working poor.



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.
www.centeraisle.net

Perspective

Drawn Together in the Center

By the Rt. Rev. Peter James Lee, Publisher

Since the Denver General Convention of 2000, the Diocese of Virginia has published *Center Aisle* as a daily commentary, distributed free of charge at most convention venues and available online at www.centeraisle.net.

Our hope is to bring people together down the center aisle of this diverse church, with a focus on the cross of Christ and the table where Christ’s diverse body gathers and is fed.

Our emphasis on the center is not a political compromise between extremes but rather a focus on what draws us together in the mission of Jesus Christ. And the “together” is not just the identity of the Episcopal Church, but our identity as faithful Anglicans with an historic legacy and a worldwide community.

A particular challenge to us is that most of us are Americans as well as Episcopalians. Even in these recessionary times, American Episcopalians are wealthy and powerful according to the world’s standards.

We believe a focus on the theological center requires a degree of humility and restraint, not throwing our weight around, but rather looking for those actions which build up the Body of Christ worldwide and contribute to a climate where freedom and



justice flourish, not just for ourselves but for the worldwide community.

So at Anaheim in 2009, we support the Millennium Development goals and actions that contribute to reaching these goals.

We support the development of a Denominational Health Plan to bring better health care to our clergy and lay employees at lower costs. We believe a mandatory lay employee pension system is overdue. We support the presiding bishop in her counsel that action by this convention regarding an Anglican Covenant is premature. We do not believe that action by this convention repudiating previous conventions’ resolutions on Anglican Communion relations is useful. We will endorse candidates subject to election by this convention.

We hope *Center Aisle* might contribute to the “Ubuntu” theme of this convention (“I in you and you in me”) by inviting us all to walk the center aisle together.

Contact Center Aisle

We’re interested in your opinions. Send your comments and reactions to centeraisle@thediocese.net. Candor is welcome. So is brevity. Shoot for 80 words or less.

Can’t Get Enough Center Aisle?

Visit www.centeraisle.net for exclusive Web content; a blog with General Convention updates and unique perspectives; and YouTube videos. You can also join our Facebook page or follow us on Twitter ([Twitter.com/CenterAisle](https://twitter.com/CenterAisle)).

Where can I find Center Aisle?

By about 6:15 each morning, you can find copies of *Center Aisle* in the lobby of the Convention Center. We’re also distributing by hand each morning around the Convention Center.

Editorial

Our 10-Day Forecast

Our forecast for the next 10 days calls for windy debates, a dominant high-pressure pattern and a chance of severe storms. That’s how it should be. We’ve got a lot to talk about, we’re full of passion and, thank God, we don’t agree on everything.

But there’s a danger in these short-term forecasts. They tend to focus on the here and now. They often overlook longer-range trends—the “global warming” patterns of this extended metaphor, if you will.

That’s why we at Center Aisle believe that our passion must be mixed with a healthy dose of patience, civility and humility during this General Convention.

The success of this critical meeting will not be determined by who wins on how many resolutions. It will be measured by the ability of deputies and bishops to live into our diversity—to achieve unity at the foot of the cross amid our differences.

Don’t misunderstand. We’re not calling for mushy moderation or unity at all costs. We’re advocating a focus on the foundational beliefs that bind our community of faith, that allow us to learn and grow from the differences among us.

So take heed: Those who insist on confrontation will gain no support from us. Neither will those who would force up-or-down votes without regard for our communion relationships.

For the next 10 days, we will listen and learn from the discussions. We will reflect and pray during our worship time together.

And we will work toward a conclusion that:

- Recommits the Episcopal Church to being an inclusive community of faith where all are welcomed and loved.

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What General Convention Might Mean to You

The Center Aisle staff submitted the following question to the Most Rev. Katharine Jefferts Schori, presiding bishop, and Bonnie Anderson, president of the House of Deputies, during a Web press conference in May 2009.

Why should Episcopalians who will not go to Anaheim care about what happens at General Convention?

The Most Rev. Katharine Jefferts Schori:

Well, believe it or not, what happens at General Convention will have impact in your own congregation. It may take a while. We hope it takes less time as our electronic connection gets stronger and quicker. General Convention will set priorities for the next triennium that will govern how your diocese is served by the Church-wide staff, and how your diocese uses the resources of the wider Church. That's a very immediate way in which it will touch you.

You may also notice it in your liturgy on Sunday morning or Saturday night or whenever it is during the week that you worship. Texts that are authorized by General Convention become the way in which we pray. And it's not just the ones that are in the Prayer Book that may sit in the pew in front of you. It will include other resources as we add to those authorized texts. We also add musical resources at each Convention that are also available for use in local congregations. Those are very small examples of how General Convention will touch you.

Bonnie Anderson: Although some may think that the deputies are finished with their work when the gavel goes down at the end of General Convention, that is not true. Deputies are deputies until they either stand for election



Neva Rae Fox, program officer for public affairs for the Episcopal Church, moderates a May 13 Web cast in Anaheim that included (from left) the Rev. Gregory Straub, Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori, House of Deputies President Bonnie Anderson and Bishop Jon Bruno of the Diocese of Los Angeles.

Photo: Janet Kawamoto, Episcopal Life Online

and are re-elected again, or they are not re-elected and new deputies take their place. The deputies have responsibilities in their diocese for the budget. They vote for the budget at General Convention, they should be advocating for the budget in their diocese. The budget will affect people in the pew.

I'm reminded here of the term that our Anglican Church of Canada partner used at the last Executive Council meeting, when she referred to the people in the pew as "PIPS." The people in the pew will be affected by General Convention in a large variety of ways. In addition to budget implications and the role of the deputies continuing, as I mentioned in

my opening remarks, we'll be having a mission conversation at General Convention that then will be carried on to the dioceses and congregations to explore in very intentional ways the call that we're receiving from God to be a people of mission. That will be a very significant way, we hope, that people in the dioceses are affected by the work of General Convention. In addition, the committees, commissions, agencies and boards which work all during the triennium receive their charge from General Convention, and the work of those committees and commissions has significant impact on the life of the "PIPS."

EDITORIAL continued from page 1

- Reaffirms our relationship with the churches of the Worldwide Anglican Communion by avoiding unilateral actions that further strain our ties.
- Focuses on the important role of our church in advocating for social justice at a time of economic upheaval.
- Offers the parishes of our church meaningful gifts of renewed liturgy and national-church support.

That's an ambitious agenda. But then Christianity calls on us to make radical commitments.

Virginia Voices

A New Approach for First-Time Deputies

By Russ Palmore

Members of the deputation of the Diocese of Virginia will share their unique perspectives on different aspects of General Convention through "Virginia Voices." These voices reflect the diverse viewpoints of the Virginia deputation, and will provide a glimpse at how varying opinions and positions can help shape and inform the transformational center of our Church.

Russ Palmore, a returning deputy from the Diocese of Virginia, responds to the new procedures regarding first-time deputy involvement at General Convention.

In his "Introduction to General Convention," the Rev. Dr. Gregory S. Straub, executive officer and secretary of General Convention, concluded: "General Convention is a combination of legislative assembly, bazaar of goods and services and family reunion. It is one of the most exciting and, truth be told, one of the most awe-inspiring gatherings in the world." That fairly well sums it up.

As I reflect on the first General Convention I attended in Detroit in 1988, I was definitely awe-struck. Although I had attended the Province III Pre-Convention Synod in the spring of 1988; had spoken with "veteran deputies"; and had read the Blue Book prior to arriving in Detroit, I was, nevertheless, overwhelmed, as a first-time deputy.

The Very Rev. David B. Collins was president of the House of Deputies. He had appointed me to serve on the Committee on Credentials. As a first-time deputy, I had no idea of the work or responsibilities of the Credentials Committee. For present purposes, it is

unimportant what I did or did not do as a member of that committee. The significant point, however, is that while I labored in my committee work, I was unable to explore the many "offerings" of General Convention. Specifically, I attended no legislative committee hearings; I did not have an opportunity to visit the House of Bishops while in session; I had much too little time to visit the Exhibit Hall; and spent most of my time *running* from work on the Credentials Committee to sessions on the floor of the General Convention.

I recall Dean Collins employing the refrain, "Now deputies, remember that haste makes waste." The admonition was designed to slow us down so we could responsibly attend to the business of General Convention. However, if I was not physically racing from my committee work to the floor of convention, my mind was occupied by a whirlwind of legislative activity to which I was not accustomed.

In an effort to acclimate new deputies to the awe of General Convention, Bonnie Anderson, president of the House of Deputies, has developed several worthy initiatives. They include the appointment of four new deputies to coordinate conversation among first-timers through an extension of the deputy online fo-

rum and an invitation at General Convention for new deputies to participate in special panel presentations, network building and information exchange. I believe, as one informed observer has noted, a "class of deputies" may develop. This may result in far less turnover among first-time deputies. Although new deputies may not be serving on legislative committees, their awareness and comfort level for General Convention will be enhanced by the new initiatives.

As President Anderson wrote in her letter to the House on March 24, "In an effort to create a group of first-time deputies who will understand the workings of General Convention, I sincerely hope that first-time deputies, together with all deputies, will participate fully in the legislative process. The legislative committee meetings are where legislation is vetted and where the voices of the people of the General Convention can significantly affect the language and intent of the legislation that will be considered by the House. All deputies not serving on legislative committees will have the opportunity to identify and track legislation of special interest to them and attend a variety of legislative committee meetings."

I couldn't have said it better.



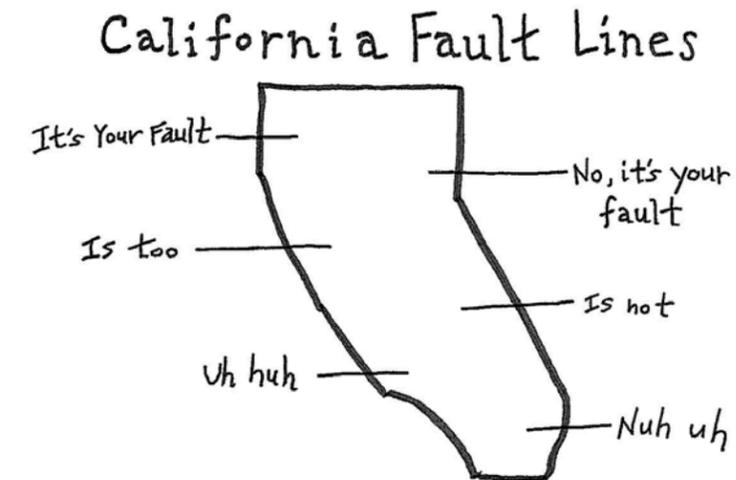
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OffCenter



Cartoon: Mike Kerr

Coming Up in Center Aisle

Rowan Williams often appears to be a man who's not entirely of this world. That's a good thing.

During a time of angry dissension in the church, the 104th Archbishop of Canterbury has become a visual and theological reminder of the deeper truths and historic ties that have held together our wonderful worldwide Communion. He is a progressive thinker deeply rooted in tradition.

Tonight, Archbishop Williams will participate in a presentation and panel discussion hosted by Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori and House of Deputies President Bonnie Anderson. Participants will gather at the Hilton Anaheim from 6:15-7:30 p.m. (PDT) under the theme "Christian Faithfulness in the Global Economic Crisis." He will also participate in the Bible Study at Thursday's Eucharist.

Check back tomorrow to learn more about Archbishop Williams, his viewpoints and *Center Aisle's* take on the issues.

Photo: www.archbishopofcanterbury.org

