

# Center Aisle

## Perspective

### Start the Procession

By The Rt. Rev. Peter James Lee  
Bishop of Virginia

We hope this General Convention will walk down the center aisle. In many of our churches, the center aisle invites people of all sorts and conditions toward the holy table at the center, focused on the cross. That gathering at the table emphasizes our unity in Christ, our love for each other and our common witness in mission.

Center Aisle is a gift to the General Convention from the Diocese of Virginia. We will focus on General Convention issues by asking of each of the issues: Does it contribute to our mission? Does it contribute to our unity? We will offer opinion pieces and news analyses, with a goal of giving voice to those in the church united in mission. We hope to give voice to the church's faithful, moderate center.

The hot button issues in our church and in all mainstream Christian communions are certainly present in the diversity of the Diocese of Virginia. But the issues have not defined our mission nor divided our people. From that mission-oriented experience, we offer Center Aisle as an encouragement to all in the Convention eager to reaffirm the unity and mission of the church and to move away from ways of dealing with issues that divide and distract us.

Our Presiding Bishop has wisely invited us to a Jubilee experience at this Convention. We believe that Jubilee emphasis will be enhanced by affirming those central matters that unite us and by engaging our differences in ways that encourage listening and conversation, not just among ourselves but also with the wider church, other churches of our

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## An Order for Convention

Don't forget your list. In a convention as rich with issues as this one, it helps to set priorities and order our business. Here, then, is our list—nine ways to help achieve unity and mission in the Episcopal Church:

- Commit to an enriched discussion of human sexuality. We are opposed to giving dioceses a "local option" on blessing same-sex unions and ordaining homosexual Christians. This is a time to strive for consensus and understanding, not to institutionalize dissension.
- Protect the unique role of the Book of Common Prayer when experimenting with new liturgies. Avoid a looseleaf-notebook approach to prayer book revision.
- Reaffirm our full communion with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America.
- Take a Jubilee approach to forgiving Third World debt.
- Double the baptized membership of our church by 2020.
- Rely on confirmation for those who serve our church in an official capacity.
- Identify successful approaches for provinces.
- Express our solidarity with persecuted Christians around the world.
- Seek the richest reflection of our church in voting to fill boards and commissions.

Those are our starting points as we begin these 10 days of discussion, reflection and prayer. Our list, like yours, may evolve like a moveable feast as the discussion prods new ideas into the spotlight. We look forward to elaborating on our thoughts, and listening to yours, as we work together to achieve mission and unity, and unity in mission.



## Handcuffing the Conversation

Bishop Otis Charles is arrested at the convention center yesterday during the Soul Force demonstration. The group was demonstrating for an immediate resolution to issues surrounding homosexuality in the Episcopal Church. Voluntary arrests do not serve to further the conversation that others in the Church are attempting to hold. See our stories on page 3.

Hearing schedule for Wednesday, July 5 (Sites and subjects for some committees were not known at press time; some committees may have changed meeting rooms. This information reflects all information posted by the Secretariat of the General Convention as of 7:50 p.m. yesterday.)

- Canons, Westin, Horace Tabor, 7:30 a.m.: A031, A032
- Church in Small Communities, Holiday Inn, Silver Plume, 7:30 a.m.: A021
- Church Pension Fund, Marriott, Salon D, 7:30 a.m.:  
Special topic: Stewardship of abundance
- Committee on the Church and Human Sexuality, Marriott, Colorado, 7:30 a.m.
- Dispatch of Business, 8:30-9 a.m. only: A090, A091
- Ecumenical Relations, Westin, Curtis, 7:30 a.m.: A038, A041, A042
- Education, Westin, Lawrence B, 7:30 a.m.: A077, C032, D002
- Evangelism, Executive Tower, Douglas, 7:30 a.m.: A033, A034, A035
- Ministry, Westin, Lawrence A, 7:30 a.m.: C012
- National and International Concerns, Marriott, Salon B, 7:30 a.m.: A003, A004, A005
- Prayer Book, Liturgy & Music, Executive Tower, Beethoven, 7:30 a.m.: A067, A070
- Social and Urban Affairs, Executive Towers, Brahms, 7:30 a.m.: B002, B003, B004, C010, D001
- Stewardship and Development, Westin, Blake, 8 a.m.: A036
- Structure, Hyatt, Far East, 7:30 a.m.: A123, C002, C040

## Great Expectations

As we begin the 73rd General Convention, the youth correspondents of Center Aisle took a few moments to ask Deputies, Bishops and visitors this question:

**What are your expectations for the 73rd General Convention?**

*"I am hoping to see how it is we are the church in a large body."*

—Phoebe Griswold, wife of the Presiding Bishop

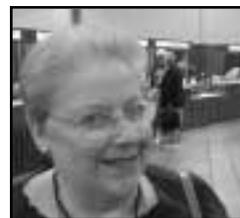


*"I think it will be full of surprises. I think Called to Common Mission (CCM) will pass ultimately."*

—Charles Bennison, Bishop of Pennsylvania

*"We will be surprised by our accomplishments."*

—Rebecca Snow, deputy from Alaska



*"I hope some of the long-term issues will get resolved."*

—Nancy Spater, deputy from New Hampshire

### Center Aisle

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### The People Respond

Join us in the walk down the center aisle by writing us at Suite 322, Holtze Hotel, 818 Seventeenth St., Denver (just drop it by the front desk and they'll get it to us, or give it to any member of the Diocese of Virginia deputation). Or you can send your letter to [centeraisle@thediocese.net](mailto:centeraisle@thediocese.net). As space permits, we will publish your letters and commentary. Please try to limit your letters to 150 words. Your letters may be edited for length and clarity. Please be sure to sign your correspondence and let us know how we can contact you.



# Let's Talk About Sex

It's all about having in-depth, personal conversations. That's the reason behind the creation of the House of Bishops and House of Deputies Committees on the Church and Human Sexuality. And that's the model the Church needs to follow if it is going to strive for unity, listen to diverse opinions and work toward achieving our mission as Christians.

The Rt. Rev. Arthur Williams Jr., bishop suffragan of Ohio and chair of the House of Bishops committee, puts it plainly: The committees are an effort by the church leadership to let people "enter into conversation with a person of another point of view and respect that person."



*Bishop Williams of Ohio and Deputy Snow of Alaska share leadership of the unique, non-cognate dual-house committees on human sexuality.*

Williams believes the hopes of the committees already are being realized, "that we could have conversation at some depth ... and that we can come to a place where the Church can still continue around the table. And," he added, "that

we can be a model [for the Church] for how the conversation ought to continue."

A major criterion for Dr. Pamela Chinnis, president of the House of Deputies, and the Most Rev. Frank Griswold, presiding bishop, "was to appoint people who represented diverse points of view on the issue of human sexuality and were persons who generally could be identified with by people at the convention with diverse points of view," Williams said yesterday.

Rebecca Snow, deputy from Alaska and chair of the House of Deputies committee, added that the creation of the two committees, which are functioning together, "was not intended to be a commentary on those committees [that had submitted resolutions on human sexuality] in any way."

Human sexuality, Snow pointed out, has been a topic of debate in General Conventions for the past 24 years, and "we don't want to be spinning our wheels. We want to be faithful to the work that already has been done. ... I hope that we can find ways to make progress on the 1976 [General Convention] statement" on sexuality.

Snow pointed out that by having these two committees handle all the human sexuality resolutions, "it makes the statement that resolutions cut across several subject areas."

It's an approach that's responsive to "the fact that [human sexuality] is not an isolated issue of ministry, it's not an isolated issue of liturgy, it's not a social affair....[Sexuality] is not just about that ... it's about humanity and the fullness of humanity that the Church is trying to help us into."

Several members of the committees, which originally

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## Virginia's All Talk

J.P. Causey brings a perspective based on experience to his role as a member of the deputies' Committee on the Church and Human Sexuality. The lay deputy from the Diocese of Virginia also serves on the diocesan Human Sexuality Dialogue Group—an ongoing forum that models the approach of continuous discussion and dialogue to educate and inform. It's a model that could work on the national level.

Formed four years ago, the group reflects the theological spectrum on human sexuality, including gays and ex-gays. Members have honored their differences while committing themselves to conversation that provides biblical and theological foundations for their discussion.

Serving on the group has not been without its frustrations, Causey acknowledges. There is no expectation



*Deputy Causey from Virginia*

of conclusion, of any ruling on anything, one way or another. It is not a legislative body. Yet, through discussion, members have gained a thoughtful maturity on sexuality issues. Despite early apprehensions about rules and guidelines, the members have grown new bonds of trust. Guided by the Holy Spirit, and unlimited by the constraints of time, they seek to examine issues with a degree of thoroughness that will provide each member with a more intelligent and legitimate basis from which decisions can be made.

The Virginia model requires a commitment to ongoing dialogue in which all voices have standing. That's the key to enriched discussion. When voices are heard, the debate becomes dialogue and the dialogue transforms the debate.

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were known as Committee 25, expressed surprise at being chosen for this work. But they also stressed that both Chinnis and Griswold were not intending to criticize the work of the various committees that had put forth resolutions on sexuality.

"There was a rumor," Williams said, "that all the resolutions on human sexuality would initiate in the House of Bishops with the expectation that the bishops would squash them. But that is not true, given the evidence" that the overwhelming majority of resolutions are originating in the House of Deputies.

Snow acknowledged that the committees are in the hot seat "because there is hardly anybody who doesn't come with a preformed opinion and care ... to some extent." And if they don't care now, she said, "as soon as a position is taken, they will care."

## Perspective *continued from front*

communion and other Christian bodies.

Last year the Episcopal Church Foundation issued a report on its Zacchaeus Project: Discovering Episcopal Identity at the Dawn of the New Millennium. The report was encouraging in reporting the vitality of congregational life and critical of the disconnect many Episcopalians experience in their relationship with denominational structures. We believe this General Convention could go a long way in re-establishing connections with Episcopalians in the pews by emphasizing anew what unites us in mission.

We hope Center Aisle will contribute to that movement of the church toward unity and mission. We also hope our publication will be engaging and interesting.

And we invite you to join us on the Center Aisle. As space permits, we will on occasion publish your letters and your commentary. Write us at [centeraisle@thediocese.net](mailto:centeraisle@thediocese.net), or drop a note to Suite 322 at the Holtze Hotel, 818 Seventeenth St. You also can hand deliver your letter to any member of the Diocese of Virginia Deputation (second column from the right, fourth row back in the House of Deputies).

Center Aisle will be distributed every morning except Sunday at the convention's major hotels and at the entrances to the House of Bishops and House of Deputies.

Christ gathers us around his table where he is at the center empowering his people for mission through the Holy Spirit. Walk down the center aisle with us to affirm that center where we are united with Christ in his mission.

## The High Table

*A guide to area gastronomy*

## The Great Outdoors

*Outdoor dining options range from Japanese gardens to patio furniture on the sidewalk.*

There are three things that make outdoor dining in the Mile High City an unusually enjoyable experience: no humidity, no bugs, and endless sunsets. But where to go? The following short list comes from Denver food critic Kyle Wagner.

- **Señorita's Cantina** (1700 Wynkoop Street) and **Wynkoop Brewing Company** (1634 18th Street): a secure people-watching vantage point above the street.

- **Anita's Crab Company** (1801 Wynkoop St.): annoy tenants in the lofts above.

- **Fadó Irish Pub** (1735 19th Street): observe Coors Field ticket scalpers in action.

- **Il Fornaio** (1631 Wazee Street) and **Dixons Downtown Grill** (1610 16th Street): umbrella-shaded patios on wide sidewalks.

- **Rialto Cafe** (934 16th Street), **Rock Bottom Brewery** (1001 16th Street) and **Palomino Euro Bistro** (1515 Arapahoe Street): see and be seen, but watch out for angst-ridden youth on skateboards

- **Panzano** (1717 Champa Street) : new patio reminiscent of an outdoor Italian cafe.

- **Cadillac Ranch** (1400 Larimer): second floor faces mountains.

- **Mestizo** (303 16th Street): mountain view, twinkling city lights.

- **LoDo's Bar and Grill** (1946 Market Street): casual, rooftop deck.

- **Cherokee Dining** on 12th (1201 Cherokee Street): pergola-covered patio, flagstone tables.

For those with a little more time on their hands—and a car—Cherry Creek offers some fly-free outdoor dining, too:

- **Domo** (1365 Osage St.): Japanese-style garden dining.

- **Highlands Garden Cafe** (3927 West 32nd Ave.) and **Potager** (1109 Ogden St.): flowers abound.

- **Ambrosia** (5410 East Colfax Ave.): lots of foliage to keep out the Colfax noise.

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