

Pre-Convention Delegate Orientation

Constitution and Canons Committee

Hon. Marie Williams, Chair

The Constitution and Canons Committee will not be presenting resolutions for a vote this year. There are no proposed amendments to the Constitution or Canon ripe for consideration. Instead, we will be involving and engaging the Convention in discussions of two matters we consider crucial to the Diocese's future. These discussions will address substantive and procedural matters.

As you know we are living in a particularly divisive and confrontational time. The art of listening objectively and engaging in civil and productive discussions of and debate of issues has atrophied. I commend to you the discussion conducted by John Meacham and our Presiding Bishop on this topic. I believe it can be found on YouTube through Vanderbilt University. The link is in the chat room for this meeting. [<https://news.vanderbilt.edu/2022/01/19/watch-bishop-michael-bruce-curry-and-jon-meacham-call-for-positive-change-in-discussion-of-religion-politics/>]

At Convention, the Constitution and Canons Committee will explore with the delegates' assistance how this community of Christians can discuss difficult moral, ethical, and political issues such as those being debated in the secular world without the division characterizing many of those secular discussions. The mechanism employed will be break-out groups which will discuss questions framed around our baptismal vows and the Convention theme of "Help us be Honest, Humble, and Hopeful." Drawing on what is learned in these discussions, Constitution and Canons will explore whether this Diocese's Canons for the structure and substance of

Convention should be restructured so as to facilitate productive and non-divisive discussions and votes in the future.

The time allocated to Constitution and Canons for hearings will address whether our Canons maximize operational efficiency while advancing the mandates imposed on Convention by the Canons of The Episcopal Church and by state law. This inquiry is motivated by the 21st Century realities confronting all faith communities including The Episcopal Church. Central to this inquiry is an exploration of, among others, the following issues:

- What size body can best represent the position of each parishioner and each parish as well as advance the best interests of the Diocese as a whole?
- What steps can be taken by parishes to ensure that their delegates are well educated on the issues to be raised at Convention?
- How can each parish formulate that parish's position on the issues coming up at Convention and the potential impact of those issues on each parish?
- What are fiscally realistic ways of conducting Convention within the dictates of our mandates?
- How do we preserve and enhance community within the body present at Convention and carry that sense of community into the Diocese?
- Do our current Canons dictating the representation of parishes at Convention create an equitable and realistic environment for the discussion of and decision on issues presented?
- Do we need to revamp the allocation of delegates among the parishes?

This committee asks each delegation to come to the hearing and to Convention prepared to participate in a meaningful discussion of these concepts so we can use your input to draft Canons which effectuate what we collectively discern together as our path forward to being a strong and healthy Diocese among the new 21st Century realities which include lessening interest in organized worship and shrinking congregation size.