



THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF FLORIDA

A WORD FROM THE BISHOP

My dear brothers and sisters,

God's blessings and greetings from Austin, TX where I am spending quality time with your General Convention deputies and ECW delegation. I want to send a short update on what's happening here at the halfway point of our General Convention.

Convention starts with many long hours spent in legislative committee meetings. Our process requires that every resolution be given a hearing. Legislative committees hear testimony from those who agree or disagree and from those who want to reshape resolutions before they come before convention for debate and eventual vote. I have spent long hours serving on the Constitution and Canons committee; and deputies from our diocese have been in other committees, ranging from evangelism to stewardship. Those not on committees are attending and testifying. We are hard at work hoping to help strengthen our church for the work of the Gospel.

As we round the bend at the halfway point of this Convention, committee work is largely complete and resolutions are beginning to come to the floor of both the House of Bishops and the House of Deputies. These legislative sessions, punctuated by worship each evening, will be the remainder of our work here perfecting and passing resolutions which set our Church's priorities for the next three years.

The Way of Love

Before I get to the issues that are surely in the papers and on your minds, I want to remind you, as our Presiding Bishop did, of where our efforts must first be focused. Bishop Curry preached a rousing sermon at our opening eucharist encouraging the whole church to realize, “We don’t need a new program! We already have everything we need.” He called each of us to a way of life he calls “The Way of Love”, basic discipleship every Christian aspires to when we make our baptismal covenant. That is precisely the path we are following in the Diocese of Florida; and we pray that God will strengthen us as we work to “love the Lord our God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength.”

As we seek to bring others to know and love Jesus and as we work to grow the church, all we do must be informed by and for the purpose of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. I found this a helpful reminder as we began our work. None of our work is yet completed, and so some of these resolutions may well change before they come out of convention. They may not come out of convention at all, but there is interest and much discussion on the following:

Prayer Book Revision – A06

The House of Deputies passed special rules of debate and worked on this resolution for nearly two hours. Among several proposed resolutions for revising the 1979 Book of Common Prayer, one framework would start the revision process now, collecting information from all over the communion about what a new prayer book should look like. This is the framework the House of Deputies sent to the House of Bishops for consideration. During our debate, the resolution sent to us changed completely. We have sent a different resolution altogether back to the Deputies for their consideration. It leaves our current prayer book intact and provides a much more gradual approach to possible future revisions.

Same-Sex Marriage Rites – B012

This resolution seeks to continue the authorization for same-sex marriage liturgies in the church and sets new conditions about the oversight church leadership has over their availability. It also seeks to make trial use of these liturgies permanent until a

revision of the Book of Common Prayer is completed.

Task Force for Women, Truth, and Reconciliation – D016

This resolution seeks to create a task force that would give women who have experienced harassment or abuse in the life of the church an opportunity to be heard, and for the church to take a serious look at ways in which we can make our church a safer place for women and girls of all ages and in all orders of ministry. These are important topics that will shape our church for the future and can only be done well if they answer the question of how we more boldly proclaim the Gospel.

I ask for your prayers as we continue to set priorities and find a way forward that keeps us together, holding onto those things Jesus makes essential while still searching for the way he leads, The Way of Love.

Faithfully from General Convention in Austin,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "S. Johnson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped 'S' and a long, sweeping tail.

The Rt. Rev. Samuel Johnson Howard