

GC81 General Convention Deputation, Nov 2022 thru Oct 2023

Report to the 184th Convention of the Diocese of Missouri, Nov 3-4, 2023

The General Convention (GC) of The Episcopal Church (TEC) is the highest authority in TEC—there is not a single person nor a single committee that decides the path that the Church will travel. The GC consists of a House of Deputies (HoD) and a House of Bishops (HoB), and every decision made by the GC requires that a simple majority of each house approve an identical resolution. Resolutions may be about liturgy, music, and Book(s) of Common Prayer; determining which translations of the Bible may be read in worship; policies and practices of TEC ranging from the use of alcohol in church functions to ordination requirements, clergy and lay benefits, responses to climate change, reparations, the budget by which to do all this work, etc. GC creates committees and task forces to address issues and make recommendations for further action, and the GC Executive Committee (of which Bishop Deon is a member) has the responsibility to assure that the agreements, business and resolutions passed during the GC make progress during the following three years until the next GC. For everything from writing a resolution to developing a triennial budget, the constant questions are these: “What is our mission? How does this action reflect or express our theology and Christian belief? How will this decision define our identity as Episcopalians and proclaim Jesus Christ to the world?”

General Conventions are intended to be held triennially. GC80, scheduled for July 2021 in Baltimore MD, was shortened to four days, allowed for no guests, and postponed until July 2022 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. GC81, scheduled for June 2024 in Louisville, KY, will put us back onto the triennial schedule despite it being just two years since the previous GC. This will again be a new kind of Convention since some of the experiments from GC80 are being incorporated into GC81. We'll again have Legislative Committees meetings and hearings held virtually in the months leading up to meeting in Louisville; this means that anyone interested in the subjects being discussed and evaluated by Legislative Committees has the opportunity to listen or participate in the meetings, not just Deputies and Bishops. Also, the current draft meeting schedule shows that the length of the GC has been reduced from nine days to six. We don't yet know how this will affect the prayer, fellowship, companionship, food, and fun that have also been a part of the GC in the past. During GC81 the HoB will elect, and the HoD will affirm, a new Presiding Bishop. Unique to the GC: Anyone can submit a resolution, not just a recognized committee or a diocese of TEC. Any individual or group within TEC may do so - AND every single resolution will be reviewed by a committee of GC. (At this time, please plan to submit any resolutions by March 24, 2024.)

Between February and June 2024, the deputies/alternates will be reviewing and summarizing for each other the contents of the Blue Book (a virtual book containing all reports to GC from all bodies required to report, as well as all resolutions currently available), attending training webinars, and absorbing information about all aspects of GC. During our preparations we will be meeting with Bishop Deon Johnson, Canon Doris Westfall and Director of Communications, Janis Greenbaum. To involve the people of our diocese more fully, we hope to hold both pre- and post-GC81 information sessions—look for details in 2024. Our biggest goal is to attend and fully participate in a dynamic and Spirit-focused GC81 in Louisville KY, June 2024!

Every diocese of TEC—which includes Haiti, Puerto Rico, Cuba, the Convocation of Episcopal Churches in Europe, Venezuela, and Liberia, among others—is entitled to send its Bishop(s) and up to four lay and four clerical deputies to GC. In the diocese of Missouri, the four elected Deputies and first Alternate Deputy of both the clerical and the lay orders attend Convention. All Deputies and Alternates share the work of preparing for GC, thus everyone is prepared to take the place of a Deputy who cannot serve. In preparing for GC, we share our gifts by focusing on topics for which we have a particular interest or some expertise. Deputies are not delegates. A delegate represents a constituency and is expected to vote as that constituency directs. Deputies are elected to study the issues prayerfully and carefully then vote as conscience directs them, for the good of the whole. The Deputies and Alternates for GC81 were elected during the 183rd Annual Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Missouri in November 2022.

As of October 3, 2023, your Deputies to GC81 are:

Lay Persons	Clergy
L1 Betty Bowersox	C1 Kathie Adams-Shepherd
L2 Doris Luc-Goodlow	C2 Shug Goodlow
L3 Michael Booker	C3 Tamsen Whistler
L4 Elizabeth Yount	C4 Joshua Huber

The Alternate Deputies are:

L5 Adrienne Dillon	C5 Leslie Scoopmire
L6 Patricia O'Brien	C6 Mary Korte

* Alternate slots L7, C7, L8, and C8 are currently empty

The Deputation has held one virtual meeting to discuss the mechanics, logistics and upcoming expectations of GC and the Deputies. Proposed changes to the House of Deputies (HoD) Rules of Order were discussed as was a HoD listening session held on the same topic, as well as some ongoing considerations concerning the Title IV Ecclesiastical Discipline Canons. We also dealt with the Diocese of MO canonical requirements concerning the election of Province V Synod deputies. Our next Deputation meeting is expected to occur in early 2024. If there are any questions, concerns, or suggestions regarding General Convention, please feel free to contact any of the GC81 DioMO Deputies.

Respectfully submitted,

Ms. Betty Bowersox and Dean Kathie Adams-Shepherd, MO GC81 Deputation Co-Chairs
(with thanks to the Rev Tamsen Whistler for her contributions.)