

Report to 182nd Convention of the Diocese of Missouri, Nov 18-20, 2021

Work of the GC80 General Convention Deputation Nov 2020 – Nov 2021

The General Convention (GC) of The Episcopal Church (TEC) is the highest authority in TEC—not our Presiding Bishop, not the Executive Council of TEC, not our own Bishops, or even all TEC Bishops together. The GC consists of a House of Deputies and a House of Bishops. Every decision made by the GC requires that a simple majority of each house approve an identical resolution. GC adopts liturgies, music, and Book(s) of Common Prayer; determines which translations of the Bible may be read in worship; expresses 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, and end-of-life care. GC creates committees and task forces to address issues and make recommendations for further action. 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?” Prayer, fellowship, food, and fun are also part of the GC. For GC80, as of mid-October, 868 Deputies were registered to attend; more than one hundred changes in Deputy status had already been made.

Every three years—usually—the GC meets. Every diocese of TEC—including 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. Most dioceses elect eight clergy and eight lay persons, four as Deputies and four as Alternate Deputies in each order. In our diocese, the four elected Deputies and the first Alternate Deputy in the clerical order and the lay order are sent to Convention. All lay and clerical Deputies and Alternates share the work of preparing for GC, so that 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. A Deputy is elected to study the issues prayerfully and carefully, then vote as conscience directs them, not to support a particular constituency, but for the good of the whole.

As of October 28, 2021: GC80 Deputies and Alternates from MO, Elected in 2019

Lay Persons

*L1 Betty Bowersox
L2 Michael Booker
L3 Elizabeth Yount
L4 Lisa Fox

L5 Adrienne Dillon
L6 Patricia O’Brien
L7 Chris Masters

Clergy

*C1 Tamsen Whistler
C2 Leslie Scoopmire
C3 Michael Angell
C4 Renée Fenner

C5 Todd McDowell
*C6 Shug Goodlow

*Betty Bowersox and Tamsen Whistler were elected L2 and C2, respectively. Shug Goodlow was elected L1, but after Ordination as a Deacon, and now a priest, can no longer serve as a lay person, so Betty Bowersox moved into that spot. Beth Scriven was elected C1, but moved to Indianapolis to serve a parish there, so Tamsen Whistler moved to C1. Everyone else moved up to the next spot. The Standing Committee then appointed Shug Goodlow C6.

Challenges and Accomplishments for 2020-2021

COVID-19 was—surprise, surprise—the biggest challenge we faced in the past year. GC80 was to have been held in July 2021, but because of the coronavirus pandemic, was postponed to July 2022. It will still be held in Baltimore, MD.

A second challenge for our Deputation was the departure of C1 Beth Scriven and the shift from L1 to C6 for Shug Goodlow. Beth and Shug led the first meeting we held as a deputation in July 2020. We did not meet again in 2020, pending the decision to postpone GC80.

Accomplishments included holding meetings on Zoom and on a second platform, GoToMeeting. We have held three meetings to date, July 11, 2020; June 18, 2021; and a third meeting with House of Deputies (HoD) President, Gay Jennings, October 19, 2021. We also have had the opportunity to attend useful webinars. The first of these was offered in fall 2020. Two of them were reports from task forces appointed by GC79; another was training for deputation chairs. Four members of our deputation have been appointed to GC80 Legislative Committees: Michael Booker, Betty Bowersox, Michael Angell, and Tamsen Whistler. A new, “positive?” effect of the COVID-19 pandemic is that the GC80 Legislative Committees began meeting on-line Nov 1, enabling the completion of a lot of work to get done well before GC begins.

Goals for 2021-2022

The GC “Blue Book” is now available. (“Blue Book” is in quotation marks because it is not always printed with a blue cover.) The Blue Book contains all reports to GC from all bodies required to report, as well as all resolutions in four categories currently available. Unique to the GC: Anyone can present a resolution, not just a recognized committee or a diocese of TEC. Any individual, any group, within TEC may do so—AND every single resolution will be reviewed by a committee of GC. (The last day to submit resolutions is the second business day of GC at 6 PM.) The Blue Book also includes lists of candidates for various church-wide offices. At GC80, the HoD will be electing a new president; at GC81 in July 2024, the House of Bishops will elect a new Presiding Bishop, to be affirmed by the HoD.

Between now and June 2022, lay and clerical deputies and alternates from Missouri will be reviewing and summarizing for each other the contents of the Blue Book, attending 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 plan to hold both pre- and post-GC80 information sessions in each Convocation—details forthcoming in 2022. Our biggest goal is to attend and fully participate in a dynamic and Spirit-focused GC80 in Baltimore, Maryland, July 2022!

Respectfully submitted,

/s/

The Rev. Tamsen E. Whistler and Ms. Betty Bowersox, MO GC80 Deputation Co-Chairs