

MECA

The Newsletter of the Massachusetts Episcopal Clergy Association

Reflections on the 76th General Convention

By The Rev. Robert E. Hensley

Perhaps it was because of the theme of *Ubuntu* (roughly translated “I in You and You in Me”); perhaps it was the result of the extended work with the Public Narrative Project, a process of dialogue and listening that Bishops and Deputies used throughout the convention; or perhaps the realization that it is time for The Episcopal Church to get back to mission and ministry in the face of hard economic realities in every aspect of our common life. Whatever the reason, consensus at the conclusion of the 76th General Convention was that our beloved Episcopal Church is in an incredibly healthy place.

As a Provisional Delegate to Convention from the Diocese of Massachusetts, I was able to observe events from a unique perspective. My committee “assignment” was to attend hearings of the Ministry committee, whose agenda was somewhat “light” compared to the other Standing Committees. It also allowed me to be present for the House of Bishop’s debate and vote on Resolution D-025, in a packed gallery from which text messages were flying back and forth to the floor of the House of Deputies. The non-anxious presence of the Presiding Bishop, her candor, grace and dry sense of humor, coupled with the unmistakable presence of the Holy Spirit in that



Eleven young African Americans visit the General Convention under the auspices of the Office of Black Ministries.

place was a marked contrast from the sometimes contentious discussions of Conventions past. Civility, “decency and order” were the guiding principles under which everyone labored.

For those of you who have attended Conventions past, you know that the work is seemingly endless, days are long and meals are infrequent. The typical “work day” began with Committee hearings at

7:30AM scattered among the hotel meeting rooms within the Convention Center complex. Following the hearings, the morning legislative session would take place from 9:30 – 11:00-ish, begun and ended with prayer. At 11:30, both houses adjourn to the daily Eucharist, each with its own theme and preacher. Following Eucharist, if your attendance was not required at another committee meeting, you could grab some lunch and then head back to the afternoon legislative session, which would last from 2:00 to about 5:00PM. Our Massachusetts deputation would then meet together to discuss the evening program(s) and the next day’s agenda. Then we would be off in our several directions for whatever special event was of particular interest...and they were legion! If you were fortunate, dinner was able to be enjoyed by 9:00PM, following which blogs were

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Not that we are competent of ourselves to claim anything coming from us; our competence is from God, who has made us competent ministers of a new covenant.

2 Corinthians 3: 5-6

Reflections

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The deputation of Diocese of Fond du Lac, located in northeastern Wisconsin, adorned its standard with a cheese head and festive beads.

updated and the following day's schedule planned.

Many of the special events and transcripts of presentations and sermons are available through the websites of The Episcopal Church and the General Convention. One that you won't find there, but hopefully will be available shortly from the National Network of Episcopal Clergy Associations (NNECA), will be the address to the NNECA luncheon by The Rt.

Rev. Gene Sutton, Bishop of Maryland, and former President of the Washington Episcopal Clergy Association. Bishop Sutton's wit and wisdom were a blessing to all of us in attendance. Also present at the luncheon was The Rt. Rev. Nathan Baxter, who will be guest speaker along with Diana Butler Bass at the NNECA 40 Conference, planned for May 4 – 7, 2010, in Pittsburgh, PA. Details can be found on the NNECA website.

Personal highlights of Convention were the Integrity Eucharist, with The Rt. Rev. V. Gene Robinson as celebrant and our own Bishop Barbara Harris as preacher. The panel discussion centering on "Christian Faithfulness in the Global Economic Crisis" at which Archbishop Rowan Williams was the keynote speaker, along with Bishop Jefferts Schori and House of Deputies President Bonnie Anderson.

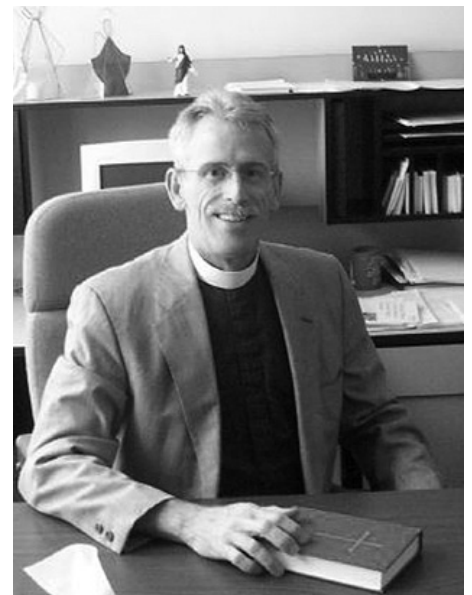
One of the most moving presentations was by a group of ecumenical and interreligious guests at the conclusion of the morning legislative session on July 14, which concluded with combined prayers sung in the Christian, Jewish and Muslim traditions. The Rev. Peter Rood of Church of the Holy Nativity Episcopal Church, with Mu'athin Ben Yousef of the

Islamic Center of Southern California and Cantor Mark Saltzman of Congregation Kol Ami in Los Angeles, each in turn chanted the Abrahamic Blessing. When each had sung the blessing individually, in English, Arabic and Hebrew, they combined their voices and their languages in a haunting trio that soared through the Convention Hall.

Over time as additional reports emerge from Convention, you will hear more reports of various events that moved the hearts and minds of those in attendance. The Youth Presence was an integral and articulate part of this Convention. In our own diocesan deputation, Deputy Sam Gould, one of the youngest if not *the* youngest seated Deputy, was most eloquent each time he took the microphone...and always spoke to the point as well as to the exact second of his allotted time.

General Convention is by all accounts the second largest representative assembly that meets on a regular basis, charged with the oversight and governance of our Church. And in case you missed the message, we are NOT a national church. With dioceses in 16 countries and multiple languages and cultures, each of which is represented at General Convention, the flavor is at times like that of the U.N. At other times, it is much more personal...more like a family reunion. What it is at *all* times, however, is a group of the baptized, striving and at times struggling to live out our Baptismal Covenant under the leadership of Our Lord and Savior guided by the Holy Spirit.

I am humbled and blessed to share this journey with all of you.



Robert E. Hensley is Vice-President of MECA and Rector of Grace Church, Vineyard Haven. To continue this conversation, please contact Rob at: rectoratgracemvy@verizon.net

MECA invites you to a workshop

WORKSHOP ON STORY-TELLING

Led by Susan Klein, M.Ed.

Thursday, October 22, 2009

9:00 am to 3:00 pm (Registration at 9 am, Workshop begins at 9:30 am)

St. Andrew's Church, 3 Maple Street, Framingham

Overview: Susan Klein, one of our country's great storytellers, will impart skills of storytelling that are invaluable for clergy in preaching and adult education. Many of us know how that a great story will make our sermons more vibrant and effective, yet we lack tools to make that happen. This workshop will build on our innate talents and help us to become more gifted in the art of storytelling.



Born and raised on Martha's Vineyard, Susan Klein is an internationally-known, professional storyteller, and author of *Through a Ruby Window*, a collection of stories about the Vineyard in the '50s and '60s. As owner of Ruby Window Productions, Susan offers acclaimed Story Wisdom® workshops for lawyers, educators, writers, memoirists, and speakers, and coaching and editing for the page and stage through *An Alien Eye*. Susan is a director/producer of numerous award-winning spoken-word recordings, the 2007 recipient of the Creative Living Award presented by the Permanent Endowment of Martha's Vineyard, and the National Storytelling Network's coveted Circle of Excellence award.

Directions: From the West: Take Route 9 East to Framingham, to the exit for Edgell Road/Main Street/Framingham. Take this ramp, and stay in the right lane as you approach the light. Take a right at the light onto Main Street. Go approximately two-tenths of a mile to a small rotary with a minuteman statue in the center. Turn right at the rotary; the church is immediately on your right. **From the East:** Take Route 9 West to Framingham, to the exit for Edgell Road/Main Street/Framingham. Take this ramp, and stay in the left lane as you approach the light. Take a left onto Edgell Road - you will now be on the overpass to Route 9. Continue straight through the next light. Go approximately two-tenths of a mile to a small rotary with a minuteman statue in the center. Turn right at the rotary; the church is immediately on your right.

REGISTRATION FORM Workshop on Story-telling

Name _____ Telephone _____

Organization _____ Email _____

Street _____

Town _____ State _____ Zip _____

Fee of \$ _____ enclosed for _____ registrations. Fee: \$35 MECA members; \$50 Non-MECA members

Please make checks to MECA. Please register by October 8 by returning this form and your fee to:
The Rev. Robert E. Hensley, Grace Church, P.O. 1197, Vinyard Haven, MA 02568-0903
or rectoratgracemvy@verizon.net.

The MECA Newsletter

Published four times a year, *the MECA Newsletter* is sent to all clergy of the Diocese of Massachusetts. The newsletter can also be accessed through our website: www.mecaclergy.org

Membership dues for calendar year January 1-December 31, 2009 are being received now. Please send your check (payable to MECA) to the Rev. David Milam, MECA Membership Secretary, Church of Our Saviour, P.O. Box 89, Middleborough, MA 02346-0089. If you have any questions about your membership, please contact Dave at 508-947-1900 frdave@verizon.net. Dues are \$100; \$70 for retired and part-time clergy. MECA members who pay the above dues receive ten issues of *LEAVEN*, the newsletter of the National Network of Episcopal Clergy Associations (NNECA). Membership dues (without *LEAVEN*) are \$40. There is no fee for clergy on disability retirement. Members are entitled to discounts at MECA-sponsored events; your dues promote communication among clergy through the website, newsletter, and continuing education events and enable MECA to be a voice for clergy in the diocese and larger church.

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Articles and letters are welcome and subject to editing. Permission is given to copy this newsletter; please give appropriate credit.

Address changes: please send to James Reamer, Diocesan Center, 138 Tremont Street, Boston, MA 02108 or jreamer@diomass.org or 617-482-4826, ext 339.

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NEW MECA WEBSITE: WWW.MECACLERGY.ORG

Please check the MECA website for news of upcoming events and to access the newsletter. The next issue of the newsletter will contain an article on the Emerging Church. The editor also invites your reflections on clergy support groups, sabbaticals and other issues affecting clergy. Please send your articles to the editor at rectord@allsaintsbrookline.org

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MECA Newsletter
David A. Killian, Editor
1773 Beacon Street
Brookline, MA 02445-4214

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