

Cliff Notes & Commentary to the Blue Book

by Liza Anderson (Lay Deputy, CT)

Caveat: This summary and commentary contains strong opinions written on too little sleep, which should be taken with several grains of salt. Dissent, corrections, clarifications etc. are welcomed at liza.anderson@gmail.com, or [facebook.com/liza.anderson](https://www.facebook.com/liza.anderson)

I. Joint Standing Committee on Nominations, pp. 3-38

Biographies of nominees for the Secretary and Treasurer of General Convention, Church Pension Fund, Executive Council, General Board of Examining Chaplains, Trustees of the General Theological Seminary, and the Disciplinary Board for Bishops.

Some things to note: They don't come right out and say this, but if you go back and look at past Blue Books and committee minutes, you'll see that the number of applications for these positions has been decreasing every year for at least the last 15 years, despite better publicity and the ability to apply by email. The deadline had to be extended and additional applications sought because there were not enough applicants for some positions. Why? Is there anything to be done about this?

The median age of nominees is 59.9 (which is the lowest it has been in a while....) The nominees are 61% male and 79% white/non-Hispanic.

Not listed in the Blue Book are nominees for President and Vice-President of the House of Deputies. Bonnie Anderson has announced that she will not seek re-election, so we will be electing a President and then a Vice-President from the other order of ministry.

One of the criteria that the committee used to choose nominees was whether the applicants had completed anti-racism training. I worry about this, because as the Executive Council report explains later in the Blue Book, such training is not as widely available as we might like. 23 dioceses have not offered training at all, and the Nominations Committee notes in their report that most applicants who had ongoing training only received it through serving on a CCAB. As a lay nominee myself (for Executive Council), I can attest to the fact that finding a way to take official Episcopal Church anti-racism training at all was not an easy thing to do. I think it's great to train (and keep training) people once we have elected them, but I'm concerned about putting up additional barriers for applicants when applications are down and anti-racism training is not as widespread as we might wish.

The present draft budget has completely eliminated all funding for the General Board of Examining Chaplains. If that funding is not restored (which I hope it is), what then? Are we still electing people but then asking them to pay their own expenses? Are we eliminating the General Board of Examining Chaplains? There is no resolution to that effect. Those who are up for election seem to be just as confused about this as I am. Right now the General Board of Examining Chaplains is required by the canons of the Episcopal Church. The canons also state that the canonical portion of the budget is supposed to have funding priority over other areas of the budget, and I would have thought that the GBEC was included in the canonical portion, since it is required by the canons. Can someone explain this to me? Is it canonically permissible to eliminate all of their funding? I am not a canon lawyer, but this doesn't seem right to me....

II. Joint Standing Committee on Planning and Arrangements, pp. 39-42

This is basically the proposed agenda for convention. It also tells us that General Convention 2015 will be held in Salt Lake City, and narrows down the sites for General Convention 2018 to the following cities: Atlanta, Austin, Charlotte, Kansas City, and Knoxville.

III. Joint Standing Committee on Program, Budget, and Finance, pp. 43-44

These are the folks who will give us the draft budget that we will vote on at General Convention. As most of you know, the present draft budget is kind of a mess. Deputy Susan Snook has some good analysis of this on her blog: <http://goodandjoyfulthing.blogspot.com/>

The draft budget is not actually included in the Blue Book because it is still considered a work in progress, with a lot of the work being done at Convention. That means that all resolutions with funding implications need to be submitted by the third day of Convention.

They also have submitted a resolution asking that the five marks of mission be reaffirmed as the framework for the 2013-2015 budget. (Do we agree that this is helpful? I think the five marks of mission are great, but there are also important things we do as a church that do not seem to fit clearly in one of those categories. It's also not clear to what extent the five marks of mission are the framework for this budget. You can analyze it that way, but everyone seems to have a different system for what is categorized where! So if we want to do this, perhaps someone should design a process for how to implement this in practice so that it's actually a meaningful framework?)

IV. House of Bishops Committee on Pastoral Development, pp. 49-50

A short and not terribly informative report of what they've been up to. ("Continuing to develop a learning, discerning, and healing community within the House of Bishops by promoting and incorporating our core values at each meeting." Seriously? What does that even mean?) Their only resolution is a request for funding.

V. House of Bishops Theology Committee, pp. 51-54

As a doctoral student in theology, I think it's very nice that some of the bishops actually talk with some academic theologians, but I wish the deputies did also. And the committees. And the staff of 815. And everyone else...

The report claims that they completed and circulated a paper about Communion of the Unbaptized to General Convention 2009....because of a resolution passed by General Convention 2009? Either this is a mistake, or that was a VERY hastily written and prepared paper....

In 2010 they presented to the bishops a theological study of same-sex relationships in the life of the church. In 2011 they presented a pastoral teaching on the environment to the bishops. They have two current projects: a pastoral teaching of the gospel and economics, and a renewed engagement with the theology of the Eucharist.

Are all of these papers also available for us somewhere, or is this secret knowledge for bishops only? I want a theology committee too!

VI. House of Deputies Study Committee on Church Governance and Polity, pp. 57-58

The Committee was charged with presenting to General Convention 2012 “a study of the history, theology, political structure and practical realities of our Church’s governance and polity, and to explain why we believe it is essential to empower each order of ministry “to take their place in the governance of the Church” and what kind of theology is embodied in such a polity; what strengths flow from our system of government and what challenges this presents; and to make recommendations based on its findings to strengthen our self-understanding.”

Supposedly their response to this mandate was to write a book, which will be published by Forward Movement, and which will be distributed to all deputies. That's great...but it would have been nice to get those books before General Convention, which doesn't seem likely. It's disappointing that there is no report of their work in the Blue Book or online materials that are available now....I want my book! (According to Deputy Scott Gunn's (the Executive Director of Forward Movement) blog-<http://www.sevenwholedays.org/>, Forward Movement is actually not publishing this book. I hope for their sakes they were able to find a publisher, but it seems like the priority should be getting this material to us, even if that means publishing it for free online....)

Addendum, May 29th: My book came in the mail today! Stay tuned for commentary as I read my way through it.....

VII. House of Deputies Committee on the State of the Church, pp. 59-91

This is depressing, folks. I mean, really depressing. But it's worth reading, even if you just skim through and look at the tables. Some facts that jump out at me:

- Between 2000 and 2010, membership decreased 16% and average Sunday attendance decreased 23%.
- We've had a net loss of more than 50,000 members per year.
- The median average Sunday worship attendance is 65, and it's less than 100 people in 68% of congregations.
- 48% of Americans are under age 35. 25% of Episcopalians are.
- 44.5% of congregations do not have a full time stipendiary priest.
- Not only is Haiti our largest diocese, but a number of the larger and growing dioceses are outside the US. That's going to change the Episcopal Church dramatically—I think for the better—but I also don't think we are institutionally or psychologically ready for that change yet...

Resolution A10 would ask Parochial Report forms to include information on non-traditional worshipping communities and quantifiable measures of mission. I'm lukewarm about this. I do think that we need non-traditional worshipping communities accounted for somehow, but the quantifiable measures of mission part sort of seems like a way to make us feel good about ourselves in an otherwise thoroughly depressing report. And mission impact is not always easily quantifiable either.

VIII. Standing Commission on Anglican and International Peace with Justice Concerns, pp. 95-107

There are a number of resolutions coming out of this committee:

A011- Reaffirm Commitment to the Millennium Development Goals- this includes funding of at least .7% of non-government revenue. This is important. We should absolutely do it. (I will admit that this is something I've changed my mind on. While I have always been in favor of the Episcopal Church's support of the MDGs, there was a time when I objected to calling this our "primary mission priority". I would have preferred that the primary mission priority be something more explicitly and distinctively Christian (because if we have nothing better to offer the world than the United Nations does, we might as well give up and all go work for the UN!). However, I can't tell you how many of my non-Christian friends have been genuinely moved and impressed when they heard about the Episcopal Church's support of the MDGs, and suddenly wanted to learn more about this church that I go to. Honestly? That surprised me. But as a result of that, I now think that the MDGs are not only good for the world, but they actually are an effective means of evangelism in our own context too. So yes, we should do this.)

A012-Advocate for a Just Global Economy for International Trade-This may be controversial in some circles? "The free market itself is neither an intrinsic force for good or ill; it is simply the reality in which trade and the larger global economy exist. Accordingly, such simplistic formulations as "fair trade" versus "free trade" do little except create false dichotomies that ultimately are unhelpful in advocating for trade policies that serve the human family."

A013-Study Genetically Modified Food Crops-Well, someone should do it. How qualified the Episcopal Church is to do so is another question...Also, asking four (or more!) different CCABs to jointly study something seems...messy? Does that sort of thing actually work?

A014-Engage in Conflict Resolution on the Korean Peninsula-Really? We haven't figured out conflict resolution within our own church or the Anglican Communion, but we think we can straighten out things on the Korean peninsula? I don't object, but I have a hard time imagine that any of the relevant parties care very much what the Episcopal Church thinks...

A015-Commend Democratic Movements in the Middle East and North Africa-includes hopes for truly democratic governance and respect for freedom of religion. I might have preferred a more explicit acknowledgment of the difficult position some of the Christian communities are being placed in, and their concerns that democratically elected governments may not protect the rights of religious minorities...

A016-Commend the Responsibility to Protect from Mass Atrocities-Affirmation of the "Responsibility to Protect" established in 2005 at the United Nations World Summit.

A017-Monitor the Use and Ethics of Drone Warfare-Monitor it? Can't we just condemn it? (Also? "the General Convention encourages the Suffragan Bishop for Federal Ministries to provide chaplaincy services to members of the military involved in the operation of drones." Surely this is already happening? In what kind of military chaplaincy would it not be happening?)

A018-Support Aid for Drought in the Horn of Africa- calls upon Episcopal Relief and Development and Church World Service to "redouble its efforts to address the drought". (Seems a little unfair to say

this unless we're willing to give them money specifically for that purpose. I'm certainly very concerned about the drought in the Horn of Africa, but these organizations are addressing a lot of areas of grave concern around the world, and (barring evidence to the contrary), I tend to assume they are already doing this to the extent their resources allow, and I basically trust them to make the best decisions about where the money is best spent. If we really want to support aid for drought, then maybe we should do something ourselves like come up with a plan to raise money in parishes or on facebook or something, rather than telling hardworking organizations to “redouble their efforts” when we have no intention of “redoubling our support.”)

A019-Continue Advocacy for Peace in Sudan-Seems unobjectionable, but not very specific

A020-End the Embargo Against Cuba-Okay, but General Convention did pass a resolution calling for this in 2009. Given that there has been no change in our policy, do we really have to do it again this year?

A021-Advocate Humane Treatment for Cuban Prisoners-Okay, sure, but since Cuba is not part of the Episcopal Church, and since a lot of countries in the world treat their prisoners inhumanely, why single them out? The first two resolves are about prisoners in Cuba, and the third resolve asks for the release of 5 Cubans imprisoned in the US (one of whom has already been released.) That seems a little convoluted.

A022-Initiate a Program of Accompaniment with the Dioceses of Colombia and Ecuador Central-I don't claim to understand the Colombia-Ecuador situation, but this seems like a good proposal, and since the report says that the initiative came from Colombia and Ecuador, I trust them to be the best judges of what would be helpful.

A023-Encourage Prison Ministry Throughout the Episcopal Church-This seems good. It would give the Suffragan Bishop for Federal Ministries authority to coordinate things on a national level in the different nations where the Episcopal Church is present, providing appropriate training and financial support. The resolution originated in response the Latin American context, but is the sort of thing that seems like it would be helpful in other contexts too. This is important work, and the amount of money they are asking for is fairly modest.

There are also 7 (and counting) different resolutions proposed by dioceses about peace in Israel/Palestine.

IX. Standing Commission on Communication and Information Technology, pp. 108-111.

The Commission was not able to do very much with the resolutions that were referred to it after last General Convention, because none of those resolutions were funded. They have proposed several new resolutions.

A024- Recognize Communications as Ministry- This is in response to cutbacks in communications positions in many dioceses due to budget concerns. A more accurate title might be “Recognize Communications as worthy of funding,” because that's really what they're talking about...

A025-Challenge Congregations to Develop Websites: The committee produced churchtools.org to

help with this for \$30 and in less than 2 hours. I was impressed by that until I looked at the site. Now I'm not sure why this took longer than 20 minutes...But absolutely congregations need to have websites. When something is not on the internet, I'm usually pretty convinced that it does not actually exist....

A026-Develop a Strategic Plan for Information Technology-Specifically about staff at 815 and other church offices, not the wider church. Do they actually need us to tell them to do this? If so, then by all means let's tell them, but it seems like they should be able to decide something like that on their own....

X. Standing Commission on Constitution and Canons, pp. 112-131.

The report mentions that the committee received some questions and concerns about the constitutionality of the Title IV amendments passed by General Convention in 2009, but felt that it was outside the scope of its responsibility to respond to that.So whose responsibility is that? The implication is “General Convention”, but that seems troubling to me because I don't really think we're qualified to do that. I am not a legal scholar and I do not feel qualified to forward an opinion about whether the canons are in conformity with the constitution. But I am aware that there have been some serious questions raised about the constitutionality of the Title IV amendments, and it seems like there ought to be some forum that people can take concerns to if they feel something is not constitutional? Does such a body exist?

New Resolutions:

A028- Would allow retired bishops to vote, but not on matters requiring an appropriation of funds. Honestly? This seems like an odd compromise. I know there has been a lot of back and forth over the years about whether retired bishops should be allowed to vote or not, but this seems like a strange way to resolve it. Why trust their wisdom and expertise in all matters except how we spend our money? (Because money is the most important thing? Because money is power? Because....why?) I honestly don't have an opinion on whether retired bishops should get to vote or not, but I think it should be consistent. If we still trust them with theology and liturgy and politics and canon law, then we can certainly trust them with money.

A029-Makes provisions for Title IV proceedings in territories outside the United States

A030-Replaces the language of “renunciation of orders” to the language of “release and removal”, which is thought to have less of a negative connotation. (It is also more accurate in that most of those who have recently left are not renouncing their orders, in that they are not re-ordained and continue to function as bishops/priests/deacons in other jurisdictions.)

A031 and A032-Requires a medical, psychological, and psychiatric examination for bishops elect. Probably a good idea....(although I've always secretly suspected that one would have to be less than fully sane to want to be a bishop in the first place, so hopefully at least some of them can pass....!)

A033- Some (minor, I think?) revisions to the Title IV disciplinary canons

A034-Specifies that phrases “the Church” and “this Church” in the canons refer to the Episcopal Church. Clarification is admittedly necessary, because it really could be—and has been--interpreted differently. (I think legitimately so. Certainly if I say “the Church” with a capital “C”, I am usually

referring to the Church universal.) Tragically, I think I am going to have to read back through all of the canons again in order to determine whether I am okay with the blanket interpretation of “the Church” as “the Episcopal Church” or not...This seems like the kind of decision that could easily have unintended consequences, so I think it's worth being cautious. I can already tell you that the phrases “the Church” and “this Church” occur a total of 476 times in the constitution and canons. But you'll all have to wait in suspense while I go and examine every single one....

Other resolutions: Two dioceses have called for additional study and/or revision of the Title IV disciplinary canons.

XI. Standing Commission on Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations, pp. 132-143

Methodist-Episcopal Dialogue: The initial phase of the dialogue was completed in 2010. Now they are focusing on 3 issues: developing relationships with the historically African-American Methodist churches, raising the visibility of the dialogue within the wider church, and beginning to draft a full communion proposal.

Presbyterian-Episcopal Dialogue: The second round of dialogue began in 2010. Discussions include “personal” versus “corporate” episcopate, understandings of ordained ministry, including the role of deacons and elders, and the role of liturgy and worship, holding Word and Sacrament in balance.

Church of Sweden-Episcopal Dialogue-A possible concordat between the two churches is being discussed and outlined. The Church of Sweden is already in communion with the Church of England through the Porvoo Agreement.

Old Catholic Churches of the Union of Utrecht-Since the Polish Catholic Church removed itself from the Union of Utrecht, there are no Old Catholic Churches in North America that we are in full communion with.

There are brief reports about other ecumenical organizations and partnerships (National/World Council of Churches, Christian Churches Together, Churches Uniting in Christ, etc. The NCC has just elected an interim President, and CCT is also seeking a new President.

A035-Commit to Continued Interreligious Engagement- Unobjectionable, but nothing very specific.

A036-Further dialogue with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America-This is important. We may be in full communion, but there are still things we have not come to agreement on. The two the resolution mentions are the diaconate and lay presidency of the Eucharist. Full Communion should not be an excuse to stop talking to each other...not if you want your Full Communion to last very long!

A037-Approve and Commend Guidelines for Ecumenical Shared Ministries-Flexible guidelines, leaving a lot to the discretion of the bishop, but I like this a lot. Some interesting possibilities for priests even to serve as ministers in congregations not in full communion with the Episcopal Church.

A038-Removal from Ecumenical Dialogues- Expressing disappointment at our removal from international ecumenical dialogues, and seeks to find ways to continue to build international ecumenical partnerships—(including asking General Convention to allocate funds, but with no amount

given?) Honestly (and I say this as an ecumenical theologian who would love to be on a dialogue committee, and was thus very disappointed by the decision)...I wish we would just let it go and move on. Yes, our feelings were hurt. Two years ago. I would rather focus on the more constructive parts of this resolution that say what we're going to do now. (Even retitling this so that it focused on something other than the "Removal" part might help change the emphasis.) Unfortunately, "continue to find ways" is pretty vague, and a request for funding without a budget seems less than helpful....

XII. Standing Commission on Health, pp. 144-150

The Commission provides a rough outline of a working "theology of health", and "strongly urges" General Convention to form a task force to articulate a more comprehensive "theology of health". (But they can't have felt that strongly about it since they didn't write a resolution asking convention to do this....)

There are some discussions about genetically modified organisms and about health care reform.

A039 urges the Episcopal Church to educate its members (or at least the American ones....?) about health care reform.

A040 asks every member of the Episcopal Church to make a moral commitment to health care for all citizens and permanent residents of the United States. (As long as we're talking about moral commitments with no concrete plan of action, why not make a moral commitment to health care for all people everywhere?)

XIII. Standing Commission on Lifelong Christian Formation and Education, pp. 151-161.

In the next triennium, the commission hopes to focus on the formational needs of senior adults, young adult and campus ministries, studying the canons about education and formation for ordination, and the theology of confirmation. (Someone certainly needs to study the theology of confirmation, but I'm not entirely convinced that this is the right committee? Sometimes I think we need a theology committee...)

A041 would amend the canons to require all congregations to require instruction in the history, structure, and governance of the Episcopal Church, and would require all lay leaders to have had such instruction.

(1a. In general, I'm always in favor of more education. But is this more important than, say, basic instruction in theology, which is not required? And honestly, unless such training is at a very basic level, most priests I know would not be qualified to provide it. Unless there is some kind of unified curriculum given, I don't see this as being very practical. 1b. Most seminarians I know hate studying polity. We're really going to make everybody do it?

2.This is in response to the Charter for Lifelong Christian formation, which says that we need leaders "who know their identity in Christ and are able to access their tradition for the purposes of proclaiming and living out the Gospel." But honestly? I am a total polity geek, who reads all of the CCAB minutes, and the last several Blue Books and Journals of General Convention, and even so, my identity in Christ doesn't have very much to do with the structure and governance of the church. And the traditions I access to proclaim and live out the gospel are primarily traditions of liturgy and worship and scripture and theology....which should (hopefully) inform our structure and governance, but you

can't make the structure and governance the foundation...especially at a time when we are talking about major restructuring proposals.)

A042 and A043 would remove confirmation as a prerequisite to serve in various lay leadership positions in the church. The commission sees this as incompatible with our baptismal ecclesiology. I...question that. Confirmation doesn't undermine baptism any more than ordination does! And while the understanding of confirmation at work here seems to suffer from a somewhat anemic sacramental theology and to just see it as a mature commitment to the promises made at baptism, I don't think there should be any problem in asking people who feel called to leadership in the church to make a mature commitment to their baptismal promises. Especially if we're going to require them to study structure and governance, then surely asking them to have made a mature commitment to Christ is not too much to ask!

Interestingly, the one word in these canons that I do think is incompatible with our baptismal ecclesiology is “adult”, but the commission apparently has no problem in requiring the baptized to wait until the age of 16 before taking on leadership, even if they are fully initiated into the body of Christ. (Some of us may be sponsoring a resolution to get rid of the age requirements if anyone is interested in that. I doubt we are ever going to be flooded with people under 16 who feel called to leadership positions, but I do think it is important theologically to affirm that God certainly can call young people to such positions, and to let that call be discerned on a case by case basis rather than automatically excluding people based on a totally arbitrary age requirement.)

Resolution A044 wants to review whether confirmation should continue as a requirement for ordination. This seems pretty confused and incoherent, and could lead to the paradox of bishops administering the sacrament of confirmation who had not themselves been confirmed! I certainly affirm that baptism is ultimately the source that all ministry flows from, but I don't see confirmation as in any way undermining that.

Resolution A047 **Develop an Electronic Learning Community** A good idea if it is well done. But \$210,000 is a lot of money, so if they do this then I hope it is very well done and that they have some good people, both on the technology side of things and on the theology/Christian education side of things. While in general I think this is a good thing, I would ideally like to have seen a more detailed proposal and budget before approving that kind of fund allocation....I can think of too many well intentioned websites languishing out there in online oblivion....

XIV. Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music, pp. 162-474

There's a lot here. A lot. I think some of it is great, some is...not so great..., and several things they just never got around to doing. (Which is totally understandable, given how busy they have obviously been.) But I'm kind of worried that this commission just has too much on its plate. Right now it looks like they are doing way more than most of the other CCABS, and that they have more than they can realistically tackle. While I do question the need for some of the other CCABS to continue to exist, in this case I wonder if we don't need the committee to split? Some of what they are doing, as well as what some of the other committees are doing, seems like it would be better done by a theology committee, which would leave them free to focus on other things.....?

There is an interesting report on their study about whether a new hymnal was needed. It seems that most people do not feel the need for a new hymnal at this time.

A048 **Form Congregational Song Task Force** would continue to gather resources and continue to work on the World Music Project. It is not clear to me from the Blue Book exactly what this is, but I'm sure it's all there in their committee minutes, and given how long the report is, it's hard to complain that it's not longer!

There is an extensive section on same-gender blessings. Since we discussed that at the provincial pre-convention gatherings, I'm not going to go into a lot of detail.

A049 would authorize the liturgical resources for blessing of same-gender relationships.

A050 would create a task force for the study of marriage. I think this is very important, because I'm concerned that these liturgical resources will end up changing out theology of marriage for the worse. Right now, I think that they risk clericalizing marriage by focusing too much on the blessing, the part the priest does, and not the vows made by the couple. The Western theology of marriage has historically been very clear that the ministers of the sacrament of marriage are the people being married, not the priest, who only witnesses and blesses their union. I do not want to see marriage reduced to blessing. Marriage is really the one sacrament of which the laity are the ministers. Apart from emergency baptism, this is the only one we get! Don't take it away from us and give it to the clergy! (Says the woman who wants to become a nun and has no intentions of getting married anyway....)

A051 would continue trial use of Holy Women Holy Men. They have also provided traditional language collects for HWHM, without any explanation given, but this is a surprise that I am delighted by, and I'm so glad to see that as an option since it was not in the 2009 text. (There are a few small things I might quibble about, but basically I am just happy to see this here at all.) Most of the collects have been rewritten since the 2009 version, and seem to me to be a definite improvement. Many thanks to all of those who worked on this!

A052 proposes adding 6 more commemorations to the calendar, and a commemoration of the first ordination of women to the priesthood in the Episcopal Church, and seeks to identify additional women for commemoration to help address the current gender imbalance.

A053 would authorize liturgical materials for honoring God in creation. This...yeah. To be honest, (with apologies to those who have worked so hard to produce it)...I really hate it. But I hear there are other people who think it's great, and since I expect it will pass anyway, I'm trying to appreciate the secretly awesome parts, like the sheer nerdiness of "On eukaryotes and prokaryotes, archaea, and viruses; on microbes of endless variety, the complex and the simple, Creator have mercy." My church may actually be nerdier than I am...which, believe me, is an accomplishment! But all of my ecumenical theologian friends are already mocking me for this and we haven't even passed it yet....

A054 would authorize rites and prayers for the care of beloved animals. This, on the other hand, is not that bad. While I'm not wildly enthusiastic, it *feels* like what I know as Episcopal liturgy, in a way that what comes before and (especially) after it in the book doesn't....

A055 would authorize "daily prayer for all seasons". Honestly? I really, really, really hate it. Sorry. I'm sure folks have worked hard on this, and if it really works for people then...okay. But I just don't

get it. We have a number of very good versions of the daily office used by our monastic communities. It's hard for me to see what need this fills. It's hard enough to convince most people to pray morning and evening prayer....the people who want more than that are generally using one of the (much better) monastic office books already. And 8 offices is more even than most of our monasteries commit to. And if you're actually going to pray 8 times a day, wouldn't you want it to vary based on the day of the week? Our deputation has been trying this out at some of our gatherings, and I'm already so sick of the G.K. Chesterton quote we get for Compline that I cannot even imagine having to read that for All Fifty Days of Easter. And there's hardly any psalms in it at all, which have normally been a central part of both the daily office and of Anglican prayer in general....I really just don't get it. I mean, I suppose I would vote for it if there are actually people out there who want to use it, because more prayer never hurt anyone, but I really hate to publish it and put it out there in an official book as if this is really the best we have to offer....

A056 would work towards revising the Book of Occasional Services for General Convention 2015.

A057 re-authorizes Enriching Our Worship 1-5.

A058 calls for the commission to continue to address Christian anti-Judaism.

A059 calls for us to revise the Book of Common Prayer to conform with the Revised Common Lectionary. Okay, sure. (I probably have a book chapter coming out in a year or so that is basically a cranky rant about everything that is wrong with the RCL. But at this point we've voted for it, so might as well be consistent about it.) (For the record, I am in favor of having a common ecumenical lectionary, but find the current one to be problematic.)

A060 calls for continued work on liturgies for the adoption of children.

A061 would authorize two additional Biblical translations for use during worship—the Common English Bible and the Message. (I cannot speak more strongly against the use of The Message as an official liturgical text. It can be *interesting* and fresh, but it is simply not very accurate, and as the work of one individual rather than a group of scholars, it can be eccentric. The translator himself has expressed reservations about congregations using it in worship as an official translation!)

A062 would allow for less literal and more idiomatic translations of the BCP into other languages.

Other resolutions: So far, three additional commemorations for Holy Women, Holy Men have been suggested from dioceses.

XV. Standing Commission on Ministry Development, pp. 475-496

A065 Would amend the canons to include a procedure for the reconciliation or dissolution of an episcopal relationship. (How to get along with or get rid of your bishop.) Certainly we need something addressing this. It seems...complicated. But maybe it has to be.

A066 Addresses the issue of impairment of a member of the clergy.

Despite the fact that it was not funded, the commission did some research on “best practices for

ministry formation”, as the 2009 General Convention had asked. Given the lack of resources, they did a very good job, and I appreciate that they tried to do something even without funding (since it seems like most commissions don't do anything if a resolution directing them to do something is not funded.) This report raises a lot of good questions, and leads to resolution A067-

A067 calls for a major 3 year process of consultation about ministry formation, led by a project manager and including input from seminary deans/faculty/alumni/students from both the Episcopal seminaries and ecumenical divinity schools, leaders and students of diocesan ministry schools, and a lot of other people, including the National Association of Christian Education directors, commissions on ministry, the House of Bishops Theological Education Committee, the General Board of Examining Chaplains, folks from the emerging church movement, representatives of Episcopal camps and conference centers, chaplains, ecumenical partners, etc. I think this is really important. I'm not sure how easy it will be to get funding when financially things are so tight, but I absolutely think it's something we need to do.

There are some interesting reports from the different Episcopal Seminaries, and the House of Anglican Studies at Duke. All Episcopal seminaries were asked to send information, but only 8 did so. (Nashotah House, The Episcopal Seminary of the Southwest, and General (!) apparently did not submit reports.)

Resolution A068 would commend *Liberating Ministry: A Resource for all the Baptized*, ask for more resources to be added to it, and ask it to be made available online.

Additional Related resolutions from provinces, dioceses, and deputies include celebrating September as lay ministry month, amending the canons so that an offense “shall” be reported rather than “may” be reported, funding seminarian scholarships through SIM, changing the canons so that a bishop suffragan can also be rector of a congregation, and changing the canons so that the discernment process for ordination is open to anyone regardless of “gender identity and expression.”

XVI. Standing Commission on Mission and Evangelism, pp. 497-510

Resolution A070-**Develop a Multimedia-Based Evangelism Guide**- for outreach to communities underrepresented in the domestic church.

A071 would change the canons so that rather than the vague expectation that seminarians will be trained in “cross-cultural ministry skills”, there is a specific requirement for “training and cultural competencies with the following domestic ethnicities/cultures: people of Asian descent, people of African descent, people of indigenous/Native American descent, people of Latino/Hispanic descent, young people and sexual minorities.” In general I think things are more helpful when they are specific rather than vague, but I am totally amused that young people are apparently a distinct “culture” requiring some kind of cross-cultural training... 1. It assumes that seminarians are not young people, and 2. As a young adult, I am kind of terrified by what it would mean for priests to be “trained and culturally competent” in my “young person culture”. I feel like this is the sort of thing that just cannot end well....

A072 would change the canons to require seminarians and bishops to receive training in ministry development and evangelism.

A073 is a proposal to establish “diocesan mission enterprise zones” for mission and evangelism that engages “under-represented groups, including young people, people of color, poor and working-class people, people with a high-school diploma or less, and/or people with little or no church background or involvement.” They want \$1,000,000 for this... It seems like an interesting idea, (although I can't say that I love the title), but it's something I'd like to hear more about.....

A074 “identify and deploy lay evangelists”--would challenge dioceses to license a number of evangelists equal to ¼ the number of churches in the diocese by 2015.

A075 is one of the many restructuring proposals for General Convention and Church Governance on the table. Among other things, they want to consider more mission-focused (less strictly legislative) models of General Convention, and they want a special General Convention by Feb. 1, 2015.

Other relevant resolutions that have been submitted include outreach to community colleges, (4 resolutions), and the proposals concerning Communion of the Unbaptized.

XVII. Standing Commission for Small Congregations, pp. 511- 515

More than half of Episcopal congregations are now considered “small congregations”, having an average Sunday attendance below 70, but well over half of Episcopalians belong to larger congregations.

They will be offering 6 workshops at General Convention during noon breaks to share ideas for small congregations.

Resolution A076 includes a few different but fairly modest proposals of ways to strengthen the life of small congregations, including making them a focus at the next General Convention, publishing effective ministry practices in small congregations, collaboration with other CCABs and church organizations, and continue discussions about theological education and compensation for leaders in small congregations.

XVIII Standing Commission on Social Justice and Public Policy, pp. 516-527

A077 asks for \$100,000 to develop and implement a model plan for prison ministry.

Most of the other resolutions ask us to state opinions on things, but don't actually ask us to do anything:

A078 may be the resolution with the third worst title in the Blue Book: “A right to human identity”. The resolution would urge state legislatures to adopt laws that would allow adopted children to have information about their heritage and medical history. Please can we re-name it?

A079 expresses concern about the erosion of civil liberties in America.

A080 is a call for income tax reform.

A081 is a call for the reform of certain interest rates.

A082 calls for the reform of mortgage lending practices.

A083 calls for reforming credit reporting.

A084 would establish an Episcopal Credit Union. This is actually interesting. Sadly, this is the one resolution that does not come with an attached explanation.

A085 calls for Asset Based Community Development. (“Asset Based Community Development seeks to identify the assets already existing in the community and build from there rather than outsiders seeing a perceived need and imposing their plans on the community.”)

A086 has a lot of stuff packed into one resolution. The title of the resolution is “Native Peoples”, but for the most part it seems to be commending the work that was done in Asset Based Community Development with Native American communities, and seeking to continue that work in other domestic development programs (possibly not limited to Native American communities? It's not entirely clear.)

A087—They want \$150,000 so that we can have three regional hearings to talk about wealth disparity!!! I do hope they realize how ironic this is? This is an important conversation, but I honestly don't see what they need to spend that money on. Maybe there's a good reason, but seriously, can't we just go occupy a nice public square somewhere and start talking?

Related resolutions from bishops, deputies, and dioceses include supporting camps for the children of the incarcerated, establishing gun-free zones, upholding the rule of law for terrorists, endorsing statehood for the District of Columbia, and forming prayer and study groups to discern and respond to the needs of the poor and homeless.

XIX Standing Commission on Stewardship and Development, pp. 528-532

A088 sets expectations for steward leaders, both lay and ordained

A089 recommends that during the 50 days of Easter, Episcopalians practice the “holy habits of weekly worship, prayer, scripture study, tithing, and honoring the Sabbath as part of the renewal of baptismal vows.” It's a little sad that we need to tell people to do this, but okay, sure.

XX Standing Commission on the Structure of the Church, pp. 533-553

I really feel sorry for the legislative committee on structure... There are a number of resolutions here, as well as other resolutions from bishops, dioceses, provinces, and deputies.

A090 would “Endorse the principle of subsidiarity” which is “the appropriate balance between the unity of the whole and the roles and responsibility of its parts, all working toward and measured against a sense of the good of the whole.” This seems to me vague enough that everyone can probably endorse it without necessarily agreeing on what the “appropriate balance” is.

A091 would direct the budget committee to reduce diocesan apportionments (by an unspecified

amount).

A092/A093 would ask that General Convention 2015 be at least 10 days and ask for funding of a General Convention of that length.

A094 would establish a financial assistance fund for deputies from dioceses with financial need. This would primarily help the dioceses from outside of the United States to be more fully represented at General Convention.

A095 would ask the House of Bishops to consider reducing its interim meetings to once a year. I like this! (Sorry, bishops, but I do!) I imagine it won't pass, but who knows, maybe all of the bishops secretly hate going to meetings.....

A096 would ask congregations and dioceses to explore creative ways to reduce barriers to participation in church leadership and governance. Some ideas are given in the report before the resolution. I think this is important, but it's also vague. Asking congregations and dioceses to "explore" something seems like a good way to make sure nothing happens. And I don't think all of the "exploring" should be at the local level either....

A097 and A098 would fund an initial meeting of all of the new CCABs in 2012 and 2015.

A099 requests funding for a web-based mid-triennium meeting of all the CCABs.

A100 asks for coordination between the different reform and restructuring efforts happening in the church. This is a slower re-structuring proposal, involving conversations that would happen over the next 3 years which would report back to Convention in 2015.

A101 asks for funding for a consultation on diocesan effectiveness which would explore the merger, separation, and realignment of dioceses.

A102 would allow a diocese to decide to merge at a time when they don't have a bishop (which might actually be the best and easiest time for such a decision to be made.)

A103 asks for international consultations to study Title IV in contexts outside of the United States where there are different laws.

A106 would require the president of each province to submit an annual report to the Executive Council on the ministries, programs, and work of the province, and account for any funds appropriated by General Convention.

A107 clarifies the role of the Registrar of General Convention and would eliminate the requirement for the registrar to be a priest.

Other Resolutions Received: In addition to the proposals in the Blue Book, there are 33 (and counting!) resolutions calling for structural reform. Some of these are similar; but others are quite different. Another resolution wants to change the canons to explain that the purpose of provinces is "to provide a structure which facilitates dioceses' ability to collaborate together in ministry, whether it

be in common projects or through the sharing of resources, assets and experience.” Right now, the canons just say that provinces exist, but does not say to what end.

XXI Standing Commission on World Mission, pp. 554-562

A108 recognizes the work Episcopal Partnerships for Global Mission, which has decided to disband.

A109 relates to our covenant relationship funding. The report explains that “Until the past triennium, The Episcopal Church has always fully honored its financial commitments as stated in its covenant and bilateral agreements with other provinces and dioceses of the Anglican Communion (Liberia, IARCA, Brazil, Philippines and Mexico.) In several instances, our mission partners were not informed of reductions and were surprised by unilateral actions of The Episcopal Church. Such actions, without consultation and in apparent violation of some of the agreements, may damage our relationships with our mission partners.” (*Indeed. Wow, church, that is amazingly not cool. I can't believe I hadn't heard about this. This makes me angry!*) “This resolution reaffirms our commitments, and makes clear that our policy is to meet our financial commitments fully, and, in those extraordinary circumstances when a reduction may be required, that we will consult and inform our partners about such actions.”

A110 calls for a meeting of the covenant committees in early 2013 to redevelop their covenants and financial plans and continue to work towards autonomy.

A111 would lengthen the term limits of those serving on covenant committees to allow for deeper relationships built over a longer period of time.

There are brief reports from each of the 5 covenant committees included. A couple of the more important (to me) highlights: “During the meeting of the IARCA and the Covenant Committee of The Episcopal Church during this triennium, the tone of the conversation was divisive and provocative. The relationship between The Episcopal Church and IARCA is in need of attention.” “In the past year, the Episcopal Church of Liberia experienced the unexpected loss of income from the Covenant Grant that was agreed upon in 2009. It was a disappointment to the members of the Covenant Committee from The Episcopal Church, and a painful shock to the Liberian members that the agreement made in 2009 was broken.”

A112 authorizes our covenant with the Episcopal Church in the Philippines. This has already been done by the Executive Council, but since it has been endorsed by the General Convention of the Episcopal Church in the Philippines, it would be nice to have it formally endorsed by our General Convention also.

A113 “Commend the work of missionaries”. Sure, why not? A114 “Increase mission funding.” Now that will be the tougher sell! I think this is important and I hope it passes, but am not that optimistic. It's easy to “commend the work of missionaries”, but actually putting more money towards it is where things suddenly get real. “Commending” them can easily become a way of making ourselves feel better about ourselves because we're being so supportive when...we're not actually being very supportive.

A115 calls upon the Episcopal Church to fulfill its financial commitment to Province IX, which it did not do this past triennium, and to inform the bishops of Province IX immediately if we cannot do so

rather than taking them by surprise. (Again, church....that was not cool. We should do this.)

XXII The Executive Council, pp. 565-668

pp. 565-584 provide a summary of what the Executive Council and its committees have been up to. It's a useful summary if you are not one of those church geeks who avidly reads all of the minutes. (what? I can't be the *only* person who does that?) The resolutions start on p. 585.

A116-121, 123-124 make some minor changes in terminology to the canons and also make provisions for filling a vacancy in the office of Vice-President of the House of Deputies.

A122 asks the standing committee on structure to make recommendations for changes to the financial oversight and budget process. *Yes please!*

A125 recommit us the work of anti-racism.

A126 (identical to A145) expresses its gratitude to those who worked on the Anglican Covenant and states that the Episcopal Church is not able to adopt the Covenant in its present form. (My biggest disappointment with this is that it is not very...constructive. I certainly have some real concerns about the proposed Covenant, but I do think we need to seriously rethink our ecclesiology and polity on a global level, not just within the Episcopal Church, and for better or worse, the conversations that have happened around the Anglican Communion about the proposed covenant seem to be the place where that discussion has been taking place. So even though I do not want us to adopt the proposed covenant, I do wish that we might find a way to stay part of that conversation as we try to figure out how to order our common life in a post-colonial and increasingly globalized world...I have written at length about this elsewhere, and General Convention is not a good place for doing serious theology, but still I just wish we could be brave and creative enough to imagine something new and offer something constructive to the discussion rather than just saying "no" and leaving it at that.)

Several other resolutions in response to the proposed covenant have been/are being proposed by bishops and deputies.

A127 The second worst titled resolution in the Blue Book! "Recommit to being anti-racists for the next three triennia (until 2018)" First of all....isn't that only two triennia? $2012 + 3*3 = 2021$right? Are they counting from the 2009 budget cuts? That makes sense...but there's no point on voting now to commit ourselves to something for for 2009-2012? Otherwise, I have no objection to the content, but the title honestly does make it sound like this is a time-limited commitment and after 2018 all bets are off!

A128 Direct dioceses to examine the Doctrine of Discovery. I have no problem with this, but why not just include it as a part of the anti-racism training that we're already asking dioceses to do rather than as a separate requirement?

A129 asks the budget committee to consider increasing the base budget by 20% for ministry with native peoples in South Dakota, North Dakota, Alaska, and Navaholand, and A130 asks for a 20% increase to the program budget of the Office for Native Ministries. (If you google Office of Native Ministries, the only matches are about General Convention 2012, 2009, and 2010...and a few Roman

Catholic sites. It looks like our office uses the term Indigenous Ministries? I don't care one way or another, but why is General Convention continuing to use a title that no one else is using?)

A131 Express solidarity with indigenous peoples. Sure, but simply expressing solidarity is easy. This doesn't require a lot of commitment from us to do very much of anything.

A132 “Dismantling the effects of the doctrine of discovery”. More specifically, “advocating for protection of the sacred sites of Indigenous Peoples, compliance with the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990, vigilance in reporting violations, and awareness of culturally sensitive areas that may be affected by church activities and expansion.”

A133 Financial Support for the Indigenous Theological Training Institute

A134 Renames and re-focuses the mission of the Jubilee Advisory Committee for Poverty Alleviation, and A135 focuses mission funding on poverty alleviation and camps for children of the incarcerated.

A136 Affirming the Compatibility of Science and the Christian Faith.Really? We need to do this? Um....okay then.

A137 the “Strengthening Families” resolution. This asks us to urge health insurance providers to cover infertility treatment and to reaffirm a resolution in 2000 supporting maternity/paternity leave for clergy. Do these things really belong in the same resolution and do we really need to call it the “strengthening families” resolution? That just feels manipulative and not very transparent...

A138 is about “Ending Statelessness Discrimination Against Women.” Is it really grammatically appropriate to use “statelessness” as an adjective? I'm so distracted by this that I can't even focus on the resolution....

A139 Affirms the letter from the Primates about gender-based violence and encourages continuing education and action.

A140 Directs the Office of Government Relations to advocate for maternal and infant health.

A141 Fund meetings of the Council of Episcopal Women's Organizations.

A142 Would ask for a study of expanding canonical residency so that priests called to “different and creative” ministries in another dioceses could become resident there. Now only a priest who is accepting a cure in a congregation is assured residency. To me this change seems to make total sense. So why do we need to study it? Are there concerns somewhere that I'm not seeing?

A143 Develop a search toolkit to help female applicants for clergy positions and educate search committees about discriminatory hiring practices.

A144 The Worst Titled Resolution in the Blue Book! “Monitor Women and other Underrepresented Groups”! Those women....can't trust them....they need monitoring! There's nothing wrong with the resolution itself...it just wants the Office of Pastoral Development to monitor the ratio of female to male candidates, nominees, and electees for episcopal office, as well as monitoring those statistics for

other underrepresented groups. But did they have to call it the “Monitor Women” resolution? Really?

XXIII Reports from the Board of the Archives of the Episcopal Church, Episcopal Church Building Fund, Church Pension Fund, Disciplinary Board for Bishops, Episcopal Relief and Development, Forward Movement, the General Board of Examining Chaplains, the General Theological Seminary, the Office of Transition Ministry, and the Budgetary Funding Task Force, Task Force on Older Adult Ministries, pp. 671-745

A148 from the General Board of Examining Chaplains calls for a special committee to consider educational standards for formation and ordination. As more candidates for ordination are locally trained in diocesan schools for ministry or read for orders, we need to clarify what essential knowledge and skills the Episcopal Church expects a deacon and priest to have at the time of ordination.

A150 asks for a 9-year vision and budget cycle, with opportunities for evaluation and amendment at General Conventions. This makes sense to me. The current system is obviously a mess, and reworking so many things every three years makes it hard to stick to a long-term plan.

A155 calls for a continuous cycle of strategic planning and oversight.

A151 is a call to action on behalf of older adults in response to the Charter for Lifelong Christian Formation. A152 calls for recognition of and action on elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation. A154 is a call to celebrate older Americans month in May.

Other resolutions:

There are currently 10 (and counting) resolutions in urging reconsideration, repeal, or delay in implementation of GC2009-A177 , which would require participation in the denominational health plan for clergy and lay employees working at least 1,500 hours per year starting in 2013. In theory, this looked like a great idea, (and as a layperson myself I would normally be advocating for lay equality!) But the reality is that a lot of employers simply can't afford to do this, so that the result will be people losing their jobs or having their hours cut so that they are under the minimum threshold.