

Standing Commission on Structure, Governance, Constitution and Canons
Remote Meeting, Zoom Platform
June 4, 2025

Minutes
(Approved August 14, 2025)

Members Present: Anita Braden, Susan Brown Snook, Lynn Carter-Edmands, Nancy Cohen, Andrew Dumas, Carolyn Glosby, Tom Little, Aaron Perkins, Russ Randle, Diane Sammons, Rachel Taber-Hamilton, Eva Warren.

Members Not Present: Scott Barker, Frank Logue, Craig Loya, Vanessa Marrero, Andrea McKellar, Steve Pankey, Kai Ryan.

Others Present: Ian Douglas, representative of the Presiding Bishop; Michael Glass, representative of and Chancellor to the President of the House of Deputies; Mary Kostel, Chancellor to the Presiding Bishop; Louisa McKellaston, liaison of Executive Council, Bryan Krislock, member of the General Convention Reinvention Steering Committee, Scott Gunn, member of the General Convention Reinvention Steering Committee, and Sally Johnson, Custodian of the Constitution and Canons of The Episcopal Church.

Vice Chair Anita Braden convened the Standing Commission at 3:00 p.m. Eastern noting that a quorum was present. Tom Little led opening prayers.

Anita then walked through the published Agenda. She suggested that since the Title IV Database subcommittee had no news to report, and considering two guests were present to report on the work of the General Convention Reinvention Steering Committee, we move the General Convention Reinvention Steering Committee to the first Agenda item. Mike Glass asked if the Title IV Database subcommittee had completed work on draft implementing canons and was advised that no, that remains to be done.

There being no objection, the Agenda was finalized:

Opening Prayer

Subcommittee Check-Ins

- General Convention Reinvention Steering Committee – Scott Gunn and Bryan Krislock
- Lay Accountability – Russ Randle
- Dioceses facing Challenges – Andrea McKellar
- Custodian of the Constitution and Canons – Clean-Up Project – Diane Sammons

Schedule Next Meeting, Discuss Its Agenda

Other Business

Closing Prayer

Adjourn

The subcommittees then proceeded to report out.

General Convention Reinvention Steering Committee (Resolution D022): – Scott Gunn and Bryan Krislock, members of the Steering Committee, reported on the Committee’s work to date, including its March in-person meeting in Nauvoo, Alabama, where Scott and Bishop Craig Loya (a member of SCSGCC) were elected Co-Chairs of the Steering Committee. The meeting discussions tracked the text of Resolution D022, but were broader in scope, holistic, and established a place for wide-framed conversations about the scope, process, traditions and purpose of General Convention. Three subcommittees were established: (i) reimagining the General Convention legislative process (chaired by Bryan, who also is the Chair of the Joint Standing Committee on Planning and Arrangements), (ii) the General Convention schedule and program (chaired by Bishop Anne Jolly), and worship at General Convention (chaired by SCSGCC Chair Frank Logue).

The Steering Committee reached an informal consensus, that when the Church next gathers at General Convention, more time should be provided for formation, worship, programming and fellowship. Bryan said that the House of Deputies’ increased use of its consent calendar has made progress in condensing the amount of time needed for extended floor debate.

Bryan noted that the Steering Committee is looking at “hard” changes for General Convention, i.e., changes to rules of order, canons and the Constitution; and at “soft” changes to practices and traditions – both at General Convention and for the run-up to it. Soft changes might be able to be implemented for the 82d General Convention in 2027 while the hard ones may well need more time to develop and approve.

The Steering Committee is aware of the 2015 report of the Task Force to Reimagine The Episcopal Church (TREC), and both the Presiding Bishop and the President of the House of Deputies (members of the Steering Committee) were members of TREC. They will study and reflect on that report in the current contexts of General Convention and the Church.

The Standing Commission members then shared comments. Russ Randle suggested adding two days to the length of General Convention as the last two General Conventions seemed like “forced marches” and many participants didn’t have enough time to absorb and make full sense of the proceedings and actions. Susan Brown-Snook suggested that we don’t need more days; General Convention is already too long and its length bars many from participating. Instead, we should find ways to streamline the process of reviewing and acting on resolutions. Bryan commented that most resolutions are proposed by interim bodies; that for 2027 there will be an earlier resolution filing deadline; we could give the legislative committees more authority to not advance resolutions. He said the 2027 General Convention will have more days than 2024’s did, and the Joint Standing Committee on Planning and Arrangements is looking at recommending no evening legislative sessions to make space for more worship, formation and fellowship. Mike Glass commented that other denominations with comparable conventions screen proposed resolutions and limit the number that advance. He suggested providing more resources to those drafting resolutions to eliminate drafting problems and said there will be a new legislative process software in place for 2027.

Scott Gunn encouraged Commission members to reach out to Steering Committee members with questions and suggestions.

Subcommittee on Lay Accountability (Resolutions A146, A147): Russ Randle and reported that the subcommittee has been continuing to work on drafting canon proposals.

Lay-Led Congregations Canon. Aaron Perkins described the work of this subgroup. The goal is to describe and define what a lay-led congregation (“congregation” being more inclusive than “parish”) is, and the process for how it may come to be one by designation of the bishop diocesan. He and Russ responded to questions and comments.

Susan said the canon should not make the unavailability of a priest a precondition for lay-led congregation status. This led to discussion on various fact patterns (e.g., when a congregation is in transition and may be without a priest for a relatively short time) and how the canon might treat them differently – including when the canon is triggered. Susan recommended that lay persons not provide pastoral care until after completing appropriate training.

Lynn said that the canon can authorize the bishop diocesan to discern when to designate lay-led status under the circumstances a congregation faces. Russ commented that he expects congregations in transition will often have an interim priest or a regular supply priest, so would not need the lay-led status.

Mike Glass pointed out that with no priest involved, a lay-led congregation would have a lay person in charge of the real estate of the congregation – without the protections of Canon III.9.6(a) which apply only when a priest is present. He said the canon should address this.

Susan said that being clear about the level of a bishop diocesan’s oversight of a lay-led congregation is critical.

Support and Training for Lay Officers Canon. Russ noted that this draft canon addresses lay officers at the congregational and diocesan level – not at the denominational level. He summarized the main provisions of the draft. He pointed to language saying that the bishop diocesan, or the ecclesiastical authority as the case may be, “shall cause regular training” to be available to lay leaders. The draft proposes a process for the suspension and removal of a lay officer, with the standing committee given that authority. That process would be less elaborate than the Title IV clergy disciplinary process. This process would be in addition to any civil law remedies that might be pursued.

Nancy Cohen offered some drafting suggestions. She asked if the draft gives a congregation too little voice; should it state that participants may have legal counsel; should it state “audit or financial review.”

Ian recommended using the phrase, where appropriate, “the ministry of the Church, in service to the mission of God.” Mike suggested expanding the applicability of recusals to other participants, not just to the bishop. Eva urged caution about the use of “involuntary committal” as that legal process is sometimes the only way for someone to obtain needed treatment and/or medication. Sally noted that provincial-level lay officers are not mentioned; that “appropriate conduct” should be defined as without a clear definition if may be subject to abuse; and she

recommended against using Title IV “suspension” language. Eva Warren added that the term is highly culturally contextual and that we are a global church and should be mindful of that.

Sally offered more suggestions about defining “authorized inquiry,” and “persistent abusive behavior. Nancy suggested that congregations will need guidance on how to raise a concern under the canon. Susan supported defining “abusive behavior” to minimize frivolous Title IV complaints.

Subcommittee on Dioceses Facing Challenges (Resolutions B007 and D071): In lieu of a report for the subcommittee by Andrea McKellar, who was not able to be present, Ian Douglas reported on the work of the subcommittee’s Haiti workgroup. As reported at the April meetings, a new Standing Committee has been elected and trust-building is continuing. The Presiding Bishop is involved. The Rev. Chuck Robertson, a Canon to the Presiding Bishop, is in dialogue with the new Standing Committee, the Haiti workgroup, and the Executive Council’s Committee on Mission and Ministry in Haiti, holding twice-monthly “kitchen cabinet sessions.

The subcommittee has developed a series of questions to use in interviewing dioceses that may be experiencing challenges, and Carolyn Glosby reported that in the interview she conducted, the questions proved very useful. The questions will be posted to the Commission’s Teams folder.

Subcommittee on the Custodian of the Constitution and Canons – Clean-Up Project. Diane Sammons reported that the subcommittee will have a series of canon proposals ready for review and comment at the Commission’s next meeting.

The members then unanimously approved the Minutes of the April 3-5, 2025, meetings, as posted.

A discussion of the best timing of the Commission’s next meeting led to the consensus that two months out would be good (i.e., August), and a Doodle poll will be circulated to help set that date and time. The next in-person meeting is scheduled for October 1-3, 2025, at the Maritime Conference Center in Linthicum, Maryland.

Following closing prayers led by Lynn, Anita adjourned the meeting at 4:27 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Thomas A. Little, Assistant Secretary