



Advent 2014

Dear Deputies and Bishops of the 78<sup>th</sup> General Convention,

The 2015 General Convention promises to be a historic gathering of The Episcopal Church. Among many other concerns, we will prayerfully consider structural and other changes to support mission and ministry for the 21<sup>st</sup> century; we will elect a Presiding Bishop; and we will consider legislative initiatives that could define our common witness and mission for years to come.

To support the important work of this General Convention, many people have considered and planned for innovations to convention's organizational and legislative processes. For example, the presiding officers have reformed and redefined the legislative committees, and both houses will receive proposals for changes to their respective Rules of Order. In this letter, I would like to highlight two other important areas that I hope will enhance our legislative preparation and work: the release of the reports to the General Convention (*The Blue Book*), and a digital replacement of the paper-laden legislative process of the past.

#### *TREC and other Reports to the General Convention (The Blue Book)*

In the past, reports to General Convention from the committees, commissions, agencies and boards of the church (collectively known as *The Blue Book*) have been released at one time, once they have all been edited and prepared for publication. For 2015, I will be releasing these reports as they are available, meaning that some reports should soon be available for your study.

The first report to be released will be that of the Task Force for Reimagining the Episcopal Church (TREC). I expect to receive their report shortly, and after it has been translated into Spanish, it will be released to the church. TREC's report will be posted on the General Convention website ([www.generalconvention.org](http://www.generalconvention.org)), as will all subsequent Blue Book reports. When the TREC report is posted, there will be a notice sent to all deputies and bishops, as well as a press release notifying the church.

While *The Blue Book* is being released sequentially so you will have more time to study it, the reports may be subject to canonical form review, minor editing, and placement within *The Blue Book* as a whole. I expect that this will be completed by late spring of 2015, when you will be able to download the entire volume as a PDF. (As you will read below, it will also be available with the Virtual Binder.) Print copies will not be provided, but we are in conversation with Church Publishing who may prepare some copies for those who desire to purchase a paper copy or e-book.

#### *The Virtual Binder*

The 78<sup>th</sup> General Convention will be as paperless as possible – a “convention of screens,” where much of the legislative work of convention will be displayed electronically on tablets or projection screens in the houses. You will receive more information about this in the spring, but in the meantime I wanted you to know what to expect.

**The Reverend Canon Dr. Michael Barlowe**

*Executive Officer*

*The Episcopal Church Center + 815 Second Avenue + New York, NY 10017 USA*

Registered deputies and bishops will be provided an iPad for their use during General Convention (deputies who relinquish their seats to an alternate deputy will give their iPad to the alternate as part of the exchange of credentials.) These iPads will contain the “Virtual Binder,” the software that replicates electronically most of what used to be provided in the physical notebook binders that have been part of General Convention for decades. The iPads will also contain such reference materials as the *Constitutions and Canons*, the *Journal*, and *The Blue Book*, as well as other materials supportive of the legislation processes of convention.

The Virtual Binder will be updated automatically on the floors of the houses, allowing for faster distribution of calendars, resolutions, committee and other reports. This will be done wirelessly, through a dedicated intranet that can be accessed only by the Virtual Binder on the iPad provided to you. This means that although you may have other personal electronic devices with you, only the iPads we provide will be “up-to-date” during legislative sessions.

In addition to the Virtual Binder, we will also be providing a free “app” for anyone with an IOS or Android smartphone or tablet. The app will have general schedules, maps, vendor information, and other materials useful for our time in Salt Lake City.

Early next year, you will receive more information about the Virtual Binder. Training will be provided before and during convention (although I believe the use of the Virtual Binder will be far easier than mastering the complexities of the old physical binder!), and there will be trained volunteers and staff to answer questions and provide support.

#### *Other information*

The *Handbook for Bishops and Deputies* is now being revised, and should be electronically published in the spring. The presiding officers are appointing committee officers and members, and those assignments will be communicated as well. Draft proposed revisions to the Rules of Order will soon be released for comment. Finally, as always, if you have any questions or concerns, please contact me. I look forward to serving with you at the 78<sup>th</sup> General Convention.

With my prayers during this holy season of Advent,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Michael Barlowe". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

The Rev. Canon Michael Barlowe  
Executive Officer of the General Convention