



*Preface*  
A.D. 2021

A few years ago, a meme appeared showing a neighborhood map with a drawing of a steepled church building labeled, “This is not a church.” Nearby were drawings of streets, shops, hospitals, and houses – each one with the caption, “This is the church.”

If we didn’t already know, the years since the 79<sup>th</sup> General Convention have certainly surprised us with that insight. When a pandemic causes the cessation of public worship and a severe limitation of traditional sacramental and public ministries of the church, existential questions become as common as musings on the weather.

What is the church when familiar milestones and measures become meaningless? What is the church when people are sick and dying around the world, and social divisions impede healing and comforting the sick and dying? What is the church when racial injustice is exposed at every level and in every structure of society? What is the church when truth becomes as fluid as Pilate’s fateful pondering?

We will continue to answer these questions, but the global crisis caused by the emergence of Covid-19 concentrated our minds.

I will leave historians to evaluate how faithfully The Episcopal Church lived, witnessed, and served during the pandemic, but it does seem clear that we quickly adjusted to emerging realities. We found ways to feed the hungry – physically and metaphorically – and learned that a mask could reveal our care rather than conceal it. We may have baptized technology some years ago, but the pandemic confirmed it as worship, education, and ministry found unexpected pathways on the internet. We kept hope alive in a thousand and one ways, as we encountered and accompanied the Living Christ along trails we were discovering.

We also adapted to ensure the quotidian tasks of the General Convention continued: work, research, mission, study, and action mandated for our interim bodies were creatively accomplished. The findings and recommendations of that ministry will be found in the

virtual pages of this *Blue Book*. I give thanks for every faithful Episcopalian who began the triennium with a roadmap to accomplishing our goals, and are finishing the quadrennium with the facility of experienced cartographers.

As you read of their work, I hope you will join me in thanking them for their creativity and achievement. To paraphrase the words of Miranda, “How much good is here; how beautiful humankind can be. O brave new world that has such people in it!”

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Barlowe". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

The Rev. Canon Michael Barlowe, D.D.  
Secretary of the General Convention and Executive Officer

## Acknowledgements

Although preparation for the triennial gathering of the Church at General Convention is but a part of the work of the extraordinary people in the Executive Office of the General Convention (GCO), the changed work conditions necessitated by the Covid-19 pandemic posed unique challenges and difficulties. Superintending the many puzzle-pieces, parts, and processes that come together to support the Church's collective decision-making, while working remotely on newly-available platforms, has raised the odds. But throughout it all, the GCO has persevered with software testing, survey development, *Blue Book* preparations and editing, contract negotiations and renegotiations, hotel and volunteer coordination, a summer of online elections, and hundreds of other activities that come together to prepare The Episcopal Church for gathering in General Convention.

Therefore, I hope you will join me in thanking the amazing staff of the General Convention:

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- Marian Conboy, *Executive Assistant/Deputy for Legislation (retired 2020)*
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Lori Ionnitui, for many years the General Convention Manager, left the GCO in 2018 and we thank her for her long service to The Episcopal Church.

Mark Duffy and the staff and board of the Archives support the General Convention, its officers, and its many activities and their excellent work is most appreciated.

Finally, to the Presiding Bishop and the President of the House of Deputies; to the members of the Executive Council and the Interim Bodies of the General Convention; and to other staff of The Episcopal Church: thank you for your faithfulness and commitment to the ministries of the General Convention. May the blessings of God's mission continue to inspire.