

Daily posting from the West Tennessee Deputation at General Convention in Columbus, Ohio

Wednesday, June 14, 2006

By Stephanie Cheney, Director of Diocesan Operations for The Diocese of West Tennessee, who is in Columbus for the General Convention

This second legislative day of Convention began again with early morning legislative committee meetings, in which many of the West Tennessee deputation were involved. The morning Eucharist celebrant was the Rt. Rev. David A. Alvarez and the preacher was the Rev. Miguelina Espinal. Most of the service was in Spanish, and despite the fact that my college Spanish is rusty beyond any understanding of the language, it was a moving experience to listen and to be a part of the spirit of the place.

I attended the House of Deputies morning session which began with the first of a series of “stories” from around the Church. The Rev. Canon David Johnson, Canon to the Ordinary in Mississippi, talked about growing up in Mississippi, a land of story tellers such as Eudora Welty, William Faulkner, Walker Percy and many others. He noted that many of the stories of Mississippi are stories of redeeming hope in that God catches us at our worst and makes us new beings – a form of existential redemption.

After his presentation, the House moved into the election of President of the House of Deputies. Bonnie Anderson, a long-time deputy from Michigan, was the only nominee. After a unanimous vote to elect, she addressed the House in both Spanish and English, noting that she looked forward to improving her Spanish and working more closely with the dioceses in Province IX. She then had the privilege of escorting her bishop, the Rt. Rev. Wendell Gibbs, who had also been present for her election, back to the House of Bishops, where she addressed that body as well.

The election was followed by three resolutions from the Committee on World Mission, all of which were adopted. For a full text of all resolutions and their status, follow the Episcopal News Service daily reports.

The early afternoon was again spent in legislative committee meetings for many of the deputies. When the House sessions resumed around 3:30, I again attended the House of Deputies where the main work was to elect twelve new members to the Church Pension Fund board of directors. The election process proved to be an exercise in futility due to the inability to get a valid vote using the electronic voting machines. An hour and a half of valuable time was consumed in attempting to take the electronic vote. At the end of the session however, the secretary announced that there was no election and that a paper ballot vote would be taken on Thursday morning at 11 a.m. So much for modern technology!

After a brief stop at the reception hosted by CREDO, I attended the hearings dealing with resolutions resulting from the Windsor Report. Resolutions A-160 through A-163 dealt with the topics of expression of regret, elections of bishops, rites for same-sex blessings and Episcopal oversight. The hearing was held in a large ballroom at the Hyatt Regency

Hotel, and the crowd was huge. Each deputation had been given 4 tickets earlier in the day for reserved seating. Reportedly, there was seating available for 1,500 people, and what was not taken up by reserved seating was up for grabs. Fortunately, I got there early and was able to get a seat. By the time the hearing started, the place was packed. I don't know how many people spoke about the resolutions, but their comments ran the gamut of expressions of support and opposition. I left after about an hour and a half – it had been a long day. When I did, my empty seat was immediately taken by someone else. For more details about this particular hearing, read the ENS story posted today.

More tomorrow, I'm sure. Hopefully the West Tennessee deputation will have a chance to get together tonight, and I can share some of their reflections with you tomorrow. Please keep us all in your prayers.