

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

Friday, June 16, 2006

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

Friday was another full day for the deputies to General Convention. The pressure is on for the various legislative committees to begin to wind up work on the resolutions that have been put before them in order to get them on the calendar to be heard on the floors. At this point, the deadline is passed, and no new resolutions can be filed. But hearings still continue in many of the committees, and resolutions are being finalized. Roughly, the process is that, once a piece of legislation is finalized and leaves committee, it goes to Dispatch of Business and is put on the calendar for either the House of Deputies or Bishops. It is heard, debated on and voted on in that house. Amendments may or may not be added at that point. If it is adopted, it goes to the other house for concurrence. If that house adds amendments to the resolution, then it must go back to the previous house for it to concur. If that house concurs, then the resolution is adopted by Convention. If it does not, the resolution is dead.

I missed part of the morning session in the House of Deputies because of a grocery store run for the deputation. I did get to hear the nominating speeches for Vice-president of the House of Deputies. The positions of President and Vice-president rotate between clergy and lay orders. Since Bonnie Anderson, a lay person from Michigan, was elected President, the Vice-president must be from the clergy order. Nominated were the Rev. Gay Jennings, Ohio; the Rev. Brian Prior, Olympia; and the Rev. Bob Sessum, Lexington. Both Jennings and Sessum have ties to West Tennessee. Jennings is Associate Director of CREDO, and works in Memphis much of the time. Sessum grew up in Memphis and attended Calvary. The election for this position will be Saturday afternoon. Both President and Vice-president serve for nine years (three trienniums), assuming they are re-elected as deputies from their dioceses each triennium. At the end of their terms, the next President to be elected will be from the clergy order, and the Vice-president will be from the lay order.

My afternoon was spent in the House of Bishops. I signed up to be a volunteer while at Convention and was placed in the House of Bishops as supervisor of pages. Friday was my first shift, and it was a fun experience. I was actually on the floor all afternoon and could see and experience first hand the work being done. During the afternoon, the House welcomed five new Bishops-elect who have come through the consent process and dealt with several legislative resolutions. Among them were resolutions dealing with General Convention site choices, affirmation of civil rights for gays and lesbians, slavery and racial reconciliation, seniors ministry, and health care for all Americans. The full texts of these resolutions can be viewed by going to the ENS links on the diocesan web site.

Following the afternoon's legislative sessions, the West Tennessee deputation had a little bit of time to caucus before going to the ECW Event. Members reported on the status of

legislation that was moving through their committees and discussed the day's work on the floors of both houses. Shirley Bilger, ECW delegate from St. Elisabeth's, reported on the progress of the ECW meetings, noting that Kay Meyer of Atlanta, was elected as the new ECW national president. She also told the deputation that after talks from Bishops Duncan Gray of Mississippi and Charles Jenkins of Louisiana, the ECW delegates were able to raise \$10,000 in support of the rebuilding of churches in both dioceses and that the challenge to raise additional funds would be passed to the House of Deputies on Saturday.

It was another long day with not many breaks, but a productive one for all the deputation. We're half way through Convention now, but there is still major work to be done in the next five days. Please keep us all in your thoughts and prayers.

God's peace to each of you.