

Jeannie's Corner on Convention

June 20, 2006

It struck me yesterday, during the long walk from our hotel to the Exhibit Hall in the Convention Center, that there was a lot of waving, patting, and hugging going on. When we all first arrived in Columbus, (When was that, again? Oh, it was a week ago Sunday.) everyone saw friends that they hadn't seen since the last General Convention three years ago. There were hugs of greeting, and cries of "Oh, it's so great to see you again. How are you doing?" And old friends would go off together arm-in-arm to get a cup of coffee and catch up with one another's lives.

Three years ago at the General Convention in Minneapolis, I re-connected with a friend I had known before I met the Bishop. I had just graduated from college and was the Junior Choir Director at St. Augustine's Church in Wilmette, Illinois, and he had just graduated from Seminary and was the Curate in the same parish. He is the Director of the Episcopal Media Center in Atlanta now. We had not seen each other in thirty years. I walked over to his booth in the Exhibit Hall, and didn't say a word. He looked up at me and said "Oh, you've cut your hair!" A couple of days ago, we went to lunch together, and had the best time catching up on 33 years of our lives. And the most amazing thing was that it was though no time had passed. It reminds me of the knitting I love to do. If I am in the midst of a knitting project and have to put it down for a time, when I pick it back up, I haven't lost any stitches – I can pick up where I left off, and continue knitting.

Many times, I will find myself in our hotel elevator with people I haven't met yet and strike up a conversation (the big Episcopal nametag around the neck is a sure giveaway). When we get off the elevator, we are new friends (or at least acquaintances). Over the course of this Convention, community has emerged. People go about with smiles on their faces, they wave at people in the hallways, or, in order not to interrupt another's conversation, will simply touch their arm as they go by. Just yesterday, I was walking, walking, walking toward the Bishop's Spouse Hospitality Room, when a Bishop's Spouse, walking the opposite way, stopped me and said "Are you okay?" When I said yes, she said "Well, you looked like you could use a hug." I said "I can always use a hug!" And we dropped our bags, and hugged each other.

How I wish I could bring back to each of you the amazing gift of this larger-church community! It is truly a privilege to be here.