

THE LIVING CHURCH

Structure: Bishops Say Amen

By Joe Thoma

Bishops on July 11 unanimously concurred with the House of Deputies in approving Resolution C095, which calls for a task force to restructure the Episcopal Church in the next three years.

The restructuring resolution was the only one to date to pass unanimously in both houses. It calls for a task force of 24 members, including some with “critical distance from the Church’s institutional leadership,” to be appointed by September 30. The task force is to study and recommend reforms to structures, governance and administration.

In presenting the resolution, the Rt. Rev. Samuel Johnson Howard, Bishop of Florida, described the “herculean” effort that went into the resolution.

“This is not just the work of the Episcopal Church or the General Convention, but is the work of the Holy Spirit,” Howard said.

“The purpose of the restructuring is to more faithfully engage with the work of that Spirit — to fundamentally, even perhaps radically, change the ways in which we do church.”

The resolution had passed “to much acclaim,” in the House of Bishops on July 10, he said.

Several bishops stood to speak for the resolution. The Rt. Rev. Ian Douglas, Bishop of Connecticut, pointed out that the church had undertaken two previous restructuring programs, in 1835 and in 1919.

“I do believe the Holy Spirit worked through the General Convention in 1835 and in 1919; there were special committees that pro-



Matt Townsend photos

Jamie McMahon, alternate deputy from Pittsburgh, shows off his threads on “Dress Like Secretary Straub Day,” a tip of the hat to House of Deputies Secretary Gregory Straub’s unique sense of style. Several deputies, alternates and staff dressed similarly on July 11.

posed the new structures,” Douglas said. “I believe the Holy Spirit is working through this resolution and, if I didn’t believe it, the fact that the House of Deputies voted unanimously is proof to me.”

The Rev. Gladstone “Skip” Adams, Bishop of Central New York, said his diocese was having similar restructuring discussions. “We plan on using this as a model for our ongoing dialogue within the diocese,” he said. “We recognize that in order to accomplish the Holy Spirit’s movement, we must be doing the same thing on the local level and that will enable this to happen for us in concert with who God is calling us to be and become.”

Bishops also approved, without debate, the \$111.5 million Episcopal Church budget for 2013-15.

Bishops’ Dissent Breaks Out

One bishop has walked out of General Convention and several others have signed a minority report objecting to a provisional rite for blessing same-sex couples.

The Rt. Rev. Mark Lawrence, Bishop of South Carolina, attended the morning House of Bishops’ session July 11 but was absent from the afternoon session, after the closed-door portion of the bishops’ day. One bishop at that meeting said Lawrence had thanked fellow bishops for their hospitality and then excused himself from further meetings this week.

Lawrence was not among the 12 bishops who had signed the statement of dissent, called The Indianapolis Statement. The full state-

(Continued on back page)



Matt Townsend photo

Deputies from Latin American dioceses meet in a circle to discuss the proposed 2012-15 budget in depth. The budget was passed by both houses.

(Continued from front page)

ment is online at livingchurch.org.

The Rt. Rev. Gregory Brewer, Bishop of Central Florida, spoke and voted against Resolution A049. Brewer will issue a pastoral letter within a week. "That will take some reflection on my part," he said.

"It is both my joy and my responsibility to be the bishop of the entire diocese," Bishop Brewer said. "I want to address my response to everyone as their chief pastor. When people are hurt and wounded, you don't hand them a hammer."

Normative and Optional

By Lauren Anderson

The House of Deputies has approved Resolution C029, which reaffirms that baptism is the normative entry point to receive Communion but leaves room for local "pastoral sensitivity" to the unbaptized.

Before approving the resolution, deputies discussed an amendment that would have deleted the resolution's statement: "We also acknowl-

edge that in various local contexts there is the exercise of pastoral sensitivity with those who are not yet baptized."

The Very Rev. Canon James Newman of Los Angeles spoke against the amendment. While affirming that baptism is "the absolute heart of our prayer book," Newman said the church needs to consider: "What should we do when someone puts their hands out versus" what "the law book" says?

"When somebody comes up and puts out their hands, what Jesus would do is feed them and then worry about the legal issue later," Newman said.

The Rev. Matt Gunter of Chicago proposed an additional amendment which would change the language of the resolution: "We also know the *occasional* exercise of pastoral sensitivity for those who are not yet baptized."

"It has to be 'occasional,'" he said.

Both amendments failed and the resolution passed by 77 percent in the lay order and 64 percent in the clergy order.

Find more at livingchurch.org

NASHOTAH HOUSE

THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

TRAINING
LEADERS FOR
EVERY FRONTIER

FOR 170 YEARS

1842 - 2012



2777 MISSION ROAD
NASHOTAH, WISCONSIN 53058

NASHOTAH.EDU
GIVE.NASHOTAH.EDU