

The General Convention

Understood Authority

Or

Ecclesiastical Chaos

Lecture I: The History

If I've heard it said once, I've heard it said a hundred times in various places and in various situations:

“Those who drafted the Constitution of the United States walked across the street, so to speak, and drafted the Constitution of the Episcopal Church.”

The nuances carried with this statement are legion, to say the least. And some of the ideas or concepts brought forward by the above statement might even be true.

Much has been written in secular history about the period between the 1750's and the 1790's when the colonies secured their temporal and political freedom from England. However, much less has been written in terms of the ecclesiastical history of that same period. Not only did the Declaration of Independence sever our connections with England, it also severed the traditional connections of the American Anglican Church with the Church of England.

I think it's safe to say that no other religious body in America was as suddenly and as severely left to its own creativity, ingenuity, and devices as was the “Episcopal Church”, shortly before 1793 and following. The loss of clergy and funding during and immediately following the Revolution could have been an irreversible condition, especially since the American Anglican Church was nothing more but indeed nothing less than a collection of individual parishes without any central organization save that which might have been produced through those areas where the temporary benefits of establishment existed.

To begin to understand what the General Convention is all about – to begin to understand what makes it work or what its traditions might be, even though many of those traditions are learned without knowledge of the historical background, one needs to dwell for some time on the pre- and post-Revolutionary period of our country.

(I am aware that we are dealing with questions of governance and order here and we shall deal more with these basic concepts a little later on. Theologically and ecclesiologically, governance should come from order, not vice versa.)

Without question, while the civil revolution was taking place in America, there was at the same time far more than an insignificant ecclesiastical revolution taking place. As F.V. Mills in his book Bishops by Ballot states:

“The scepter was separated from the mitre.”

From 1789 forward, bishops and budgets were both brought forward by ballot in all places including the General Convention by clergy and laity, meeting together and voting together.

This simple phenomenon was unique, and indeed revolutionary – as revolutionary as the American Revolution itself.

“And the spirit which brought about both the civil and the ecclesiastical revolutions is seen and carried forward into the General Convention of the Episcopal Church and the formulating of its first Constitution in 1789. Lay members of the Episcopal Church, aided by their clergy, confirmed Episcopal servanthood by electing bishops democratically and by themselves passing on every measure pertaining to episcopacy. Thereafter, bishops were to be responsible to the Church’s General Convention and to their respective states’ (later diocesan) conventions.

“The actions of the churchmen between 1782 and 1789 marked a stunning reversal of ecclesiastical tradition, one which has, for whatever reasons, remained long-hidden from view and from the understanding of those who attend the General Convention, and from the Church in general.”

Without question, it was the direct intention of the Anglican Church in America, also called the Protestant Episcopal (first in Chestertown, Maryland on November 9, 1780, but not used officially in Maryland until 1783) to eliminate any use of the medieval concept of a magisterial prince-bishop, appointed by and responsible to the king, which was the case in England from the time of William I. Rather, the Episcopal Church quite “consciously re-captured the primitive episcopate wholly separate from the state. They determined also that bishops were to be servants of the Church and not its lords.”¹

The issue of episcopacy, more than any other, caused deep conflict and great argument. It is easy to see and understand the colonists’ feelings with regard to bishops, who in the former’s minds and experiences had served Church and state as spiritual lords of the realm. Having just released themselves from monarchical rule, there was more than a little hesitancy to establish this principal in a newly organizing church.

By and large, the office of bishop was defined in the early American church as being no different from that of any other clergyman, except that he could ordain, confirm, make clerical visitations; and finally by 1789, was given permission to serve as the presiding officer of ecclesiastical assemblies. In all of this, the primitive aspect of the episcopacy, not the princely aspect of the office, was put forward, always with care to separate church and state while stressing the servanthood of the office.

As an aside, it is interesting to know that during the 1978 meeting of the House of Bishops, the Diocese of Mexico requested permission for the election of three Suffragan bishops and presented the rationale of the primitive office of bishop for missionary purposes and strategies as the reasons for calling for the election of these bishops. Like early American bishops, they were to remain the rectors of their congregations.

The idea of a “primitive episcopate” in no way brought forward the kinds of emotions and fear as was provoked by the English style of episcopacy. The greatest opposition to the episcopacy being established in the colonies emerged, as would be expected, from those areas, especially in the south, where vestries and parishes fairly well “ran their own show”, so to speak, by being able to successfully maintain the right to select and call their own rector. Many of these same places, also being the largest parishes in the colonies, were legally established. For quite a

¹ Christian Century review by J.F. Woolverton, 1979, pages 55 and 56

number of years, the Church in the several colonies and the laity within those colonies had been forced to carry on without adequate clerical attention and assistance. The English Church did not see the need for bishops in the colonies, since they were already under the rule of the Bishop of London, and the S.P.G. (Society for the Propagation of the Gospel) seemingly was unable to argue successfully for Episcopal oversight, partially because of a Catch-22 situation. Confirmation was not available and thus limited the number taking Communion. This seemed to greatly hamper the determination of the exact number of members that could be ascribed to the Anglican fold in America.

To comprehend the long-standing feeling of the House of Deputies, as we experience it today (and indeed, as it has many times functioned, even in recent years), it is important to understand the vestries of the early colonial Church.

In all the American colonies, select vestries were the type seen and functioning, but their authority differed substantially, depending upon their location. In England, the select vestry emerged out of an annual parish meeting which chose a rector's warden and a people's warden. By the seventeenth century, a small group of persons usually "the most important and most respected" of the congregation, were picked to represent the whole body. It was this group which took unto itself a great many powers and responsibilities heretofore not ascribed to vestries per se, and more especially to the laity.

In Virginia, for example, the vestry selected the minister, wardens were the executives of the parish, and the vestry even raised a tobacco tax for church support. In the absence of clergy, they selected lay-readers, many of whom, throughout the colonies, were ordained after being trained in America. The use of lay-readers was a wide-spread custom, but the lay-reader was selected by the vestry to lead the congregation in worship. The powers of the Virginia vestries over clergy presented what seems to many a new and lasting type of clerical-lay relationship.

The churches in New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware were "established by individual charters of incorporation." These vestries could raise funds as they choose and could select their priest, with or without tenure. This group of colonial churches was freer to function due to the lack of interference by the colonial governments. As a result, the responsibility for the congregation's growth, health, and prosperity was primarily the responsibility of the individual congregation, i.e. the laity.

The churches in the northern group of colonies functioned much the same as those located in the middle portion of America, except a limit was not usually placed on the number of vestry members a parish might have when a particular congregation incorporated.

As you can begin to see, and as we will point out later on, "the legal supremacy of the General Convention was built on a base of broad powers, granted, retained, and exercised on the local and parish level", regardless of the theological concept that the bishop of a diocese is the central focus and symbol of the unity of the diocese, and that the basic unit of the Church is the diocese. In the colonial period (and, one might say, with residuals existing in some places today), the basic unit of the Church was at the parish level. Indeed, the integrity of the House of Deputies, the traditions of that House, are quickly learned by new deputies as they begin to serve on the floor of the House of Deputies and in the various legislative committees, even though most of these people have no knowledge of the historical reasons for the traditions which seemed to be passed on, as it were, by osmosis, from Convention to Convention. One could not listen very long to George Humrickhouse of Virginia, Mr. Constitution himself, on the floor of the House of Deputies, without catching the fervor or the spirit of what went into the organizing of the

General Convention. It is also interesting to remember that it has been the Diocese of Virginia, in the last three General Conventions, which has submitted a resolution asking for the Convention and the Standing Commission on Structure to study the feasibility of a uni-cameral House.

Again, one could almost see the tradition of which we speak come to life in the 1973 General Convention, when concurrence with the House of Bishops' election of a Presiding Bishop occurred only after extensive and lengthy debate. In a subsequent Convention, in fact, the very next, the House of Deputies changed the nominating process for the election of a Presiding Bishop. Instead of referring back to Article I, Section 3 of the Constitution for the election process, put forward in the 1973 Canons, which simply state,

“Such choice to be subject to the confirmation of the House of Deputies ...”

The new Canon, written and added to Title I, Canon 2 for the election of a Presiding Bishop, in Section 1, subsections (a), (b), (c), and (d) of that canon, says in subsection (d),

“Thereafter, the House of Deputies shall vote, to confirm, or not to confirm, such a choice of a Presiding Bishop.”

For some strange reason, I'm looking forward to an early debate on one resolution which will be presented by an Interim Body of the General Convention in New Orleans. This resolution will call for the changing of the title of the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church to the title “Archbishop”. I think it will be extremely interesting to see how the arguments, pro and con, are formed, as surely as I think those arguments pro and con will be formed.

Save for the Church in Connecticut, which from the very outset, felt and stated the necessity of the Episcopal office to be present prior to the existence of any constitutional establishment or organizational structure, the vast majority of American churches felt they could get along quite well without bishops for some period of time. At the same time, there was no small amount of uneasiness in a number of the Churches regarding the individuality and separateness of the several congregations throughout the colonies. There was a genuine concern about governance, individualistic liturgies, and order that surfaced even while there were disagreements and debates on one or two proposed plans formulated to present a case for the Episcopal office or some form of governance in the colonies.

In 1767, following the second New Jersey inter-colonial convention, Thomas B. Chandler wrote An Appeal To The Public In Behalf of The Church of England. It simply was an attempt to reduce fear and doubt with regard to bishops, but in actuality it produced greater anger on the part of the dissenters. The Johnson-Chandler plan, as it was known, led to lengthy and emotional debates throughout the colonies. The William Smith-Samuel Peters proposal for a missionary form of government enjoyed a similar response.

To my way of thinking, a singular event, which may have begun the whole turn-around process in reasoning within the colonies towards some type of unified/unitary or republican governance which would slow individuality and independence on the part of the several colonies and of the congregations therein, as well as preserving a unanimity in regard to liturgy and order (which includes ministry), was the event which took place in Boston on June 19, 1785. Religious liberalism was a phenomenon with which all colonial denominations had to deal, especially in the form of Unitarianism or Deism.

The singular event to which I refer was the re-opening of King's Chapel in Boston in 1782 by the laity, who selected James Freeman as their Lay-Reader. Freeman, a liberal thinker, as he is described by Mills in his book, Bishops by Ballot, came under the influence of William Hazlitt, a Unitarian minister. Freeman changed the liturgy of King's Chapel, and accepted the idea that a congregation could ordain its own minister. The result of all this was that on June 19, 1785, about three months before the first General Convention, which was held in Christ Church, Philadelphia, on September 27, 1785, King's Chapel adopted a Unitarian liturgy and about two years from that date, Freeman was ordained a Unitarian, having been refused the ordinances of the Episcopal Church because of his heretical ideas.

There were one or two events similar to the King's Chapel situation which demonstrated quite vividly what was happening and what could continue to happen to a denomination which was unorganized but was, up to this time, quite identifiable by its liturgy.

One's head literally begins to swim with the myriad of extremely important events which took place between 1782 and 1789. As far as the English churches in America are concerned, it is important to remember that an overwhelming majority of the churches were dedicated to a republican form of government for the colonies, as well as the whole Revolutionary cause. From 1775, most references to the king and parliament had been deleted from the liturgies of the Church and those churches which had been closed because of such references to the king and parliament had been deleted from the liturgies of the Church and those churches which had been closed because of such references in the Prayer Book were now re-opening with appropriate deletions. Also it is important to remember that basic ecclesiastical units were the local church or parish vestries, and these churches and parishes were controlled by men who had fought against the British and were identified with the colonial cause.

These men, while working extremely hard to produce a nation and all that appertains thereunto, were putting together a quite distinctively different structure in terms of governance for the Church; extremely different from anything that had been known in the British Church. To even begin to think of all the important changes taking place in both the civil and ecclesiastical lives of the colonists belonging to the Episcopal Church almost leads one to incredulousness.

The events and the colonial mind-set leading to the King's Chapel incident of 1785, as well as the unsuccessful attempt to produce an acceptable plan of governance of the Church allows for more than a modicum of understanding about the "fertility of the soil" into which the seeds of William White's The Case of Protestant Episcopal Church in United States Considered fell and took root. This Case was central and essential to the re-organizing of the several congregations in the colonies, something that could only be accomplished with the wholehearted co-operation of both clergy and laity.

Not only was the ground fertile for such seeds, the historical events of the succeeding two years produced a greater feasibility for success. The Case was written in the summer of 1782 while America was still at war with the English and it preceded the signing of the preliminary peace treaty on November 30, 1782, which became final on September 3, 1783. Adding to this picture of the fast-moving events, by act of Parliament, English bishops were able to ordain colonial aspirants after August 13, 1784, and all congregations and clergy were freed from all controls of state legislatures by 1784.

If the Church in America were to grow and maintain its identity as Anglican in worship and order, a centralized ecclesiastical authority at the state and national level was essential in order to combat the "King's Chapels", and prohibit, or at least restrict to some major degree, the ability

of clergy and/or congregations to alter the liturgy, change Church polity, and even reject the traditions of the Church of England.

White's plan, as set forward in the Case, was simply that the American Church should build from the bottom to the top, rather than from the other way around as in England, i.e. from parish to diocese. White's ideas were in complete agreement with those of the Revolution, that people's interests and good government are the same, and the very best way to insure this ideal was to allow and provide for people to have maximum input into the creation and formulation of that free government.²

William White's Case and later his Principles formed the basis of the Constitution of the Church brought forward in the General Convention of 1789. White's Case gives us some idea of the origin of the structure of our Church, as we see it today, and indeed, some of the intentions behind that structure or governance.

From the Case, William White, later Bishop White of Philadelphia, produced six fundamental principles:

1. The Church is and ought to be free and independent of all foreign authority, ecclesiastical or civil;
2. The Church in The United States should have full and exclusive power to regulate concerns of its own communions;
3. The doctrines of the Gospel as then professed by the Church of England and uniformity of worship be continued, as near as may be possible;
4. The succession of ministry in three orders:
 1. Bishops
 2. Priests
 3. Deacons

And the rights and powers of the same shall be ascertained and exercised according to reasonable law to be duly made;

5. Canons shall be made by no other authority than that of a representative body of the clergy and laity, acting co-jointly; and
6. No powers shall be allocated to a general ecclesiastical government except such as cannot be conveniently exercised by local congregations.

Without question, White intended to present a plan which fully preserved the faith, doctrine, and worship of the Church of England while changing the form of governance of the Church for the circumstance found in the United States. His changes in government followed a contract-theory of government, and the de facto recognition that local government was already the fact; there was no existing domestic episcopacy; and there had been no dioceses formed; thus leaving the parish as the basic unit of the Church in this country.³

White's changes in governance, mitigated by the American circumstance, has:

² Gordon S. Wood, The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-87, New York, 1972.

³ Robert C. Royce, Report on the Standing Commission on Structure, 1981.

- a) Clergy and Laity – meeting and voting in one body;
- b) No area of Church government is beyond the authority of such a gathering of clergy and laity, and individuals do not possess a veto;
- c) Every communicant or member of the Church has a right to participate in the development of Church government through the parish delegate to the diocesan convention;
- d) Bishops should continue to serve as a rector, confined to a small district; and
- e) No power shall be given to any diocesan, regional, or national Church, except those which cannot conveniently be accomplished by the clergy and laity in their respective congregations.

Except for a political suggestion that for a temporary period of time (more out of necessity and for political balance, he believed, that the gradual introduction of bishops might be accomplished), a Presbyterian-type of ordination be accepted. Except for this one deviation, the Case dealt with governance and not with order or ministry.

Following the Declaration of Independence and dis-establishment of the English Church, events seemed to move with break-neck speed. The experience of regional and inter-colonial gatherings of congregations provided a working model as well as an incentive for some type of centralizing organization.

The first authorized ecclesiastical assembly of Episcopalians in America, at which the laity were officially a part, took place at Christ Church, Philadelphia, on May 24, 1784. Great care was taken by William White to involve his brother clergy and to secure lay representation for the meeting. Written notices were sent out prior to the meeting and Minutes were distributed following the meeting. Using his Case as a plan for the meeting, White prepared and presented the six fundamental principles stated earlier.

The Maryland churches met in Annapolis in August, 1783, producing a Declaration of Certain Fundamental Principles. The Declaration stressed orders of ministers and the necessity for Episcopal ordination, and that only Episcopally ordained clergy be admitted to Maryland congregations. At the second convention in Maryland, on June 22, 1784, which included laity, the Declaration was again approved as written, and the laity added four articles which,

- a) Forbid any foreign oath by any ordinand;
- b) Defined episcopal authority, and the fact that it could be changed only in Convention;
- c) The training of the clergy was the responsibility of the clergy but the acceptance of them into a parish was reserved for the people who supported the clergy; and
- d) Each parish was entitled one clerical and one lay representative at future conventions.

Thus Maryland checked the hierarchical approach to structure/governance.

Similar meetings were held in almost all areas of the United States, each adding to the fundamental principles or the Declaration, items of their own areas of concern. Massachusetts and Rhode Island adopted the principles with two modifications. Others drew up Rules for the

Order, Governance, and Discipline of the Protestant Episcopal Church. It seemed, because of this action, that by July, 1785, the formation of an ecclesiastical confederation would soon take place and produce a national union. What seemed at first as an exercise that would be a very easy and orderly transition of congregations in 1785 and 1786, into a national Protestant Episcopal Church in 1789, was anything but simple and free of conflict.

Of the assemblies or conventions taking place during this period of 1782-1785, the Woodbury, Connecticut Convention, held in the house of John Rutgers Marshall, on March 25, 1783, and consisting of only ten of the twenty-four Connecticut clergy, met quite surreptitiously. The primary reason for their meeting was to obtain Episcopal oversight. It would be over a year later that general knowledge of the Connecticut plan would be abroad in the American Church. When you stop to think about it, this is an amazing fact to contemplate, to say the least, when you realize and reflect on how rapid and how far-reaching the auxiliary communications systems are today. But then again, there was a great deal less mobility during that time. I must add, there was one “leak”, however. One of the clergy present at the Woodbury Convention wrote to the rector of Trinity Church, Boston, in July that same year, thus providing the only known facts about this meeting.

The results of the Connecticut plan are well known. Jeremiah Leaming was elected bishop by the clergy, but declined because of age and ill health. At the second meeting of this group, Samuel Seabury was elected bishop and after some consultation and the securing of credentials from New York clergy, arrived in England in July 1783, to present himself to the Archbishop of York for ordination and consecration. Unable to be consecrated by English bishops for many reasons, both in England as well as concerns regarding reaction in the colonies, Samuel Seabury was consecrated bishop on November 14, 1784, by the Primus of Scotland, Robert Kilgour and two other non-juring bishops.

Arriving back in America in June 1785, with Episcopal orders, Seabury represented the Connecticut point of view regarding governance by clergy as well as the importance and primacy of bishops in Church polity. While Seabury was in England and Scotland, the Connecticut plan came to light. It was decided that a voluntary group of clergy and laity from several of the states would come together and make plans for a General Convention. At the October, 1784, New York meeting, plans were put forward for the first General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church, and a preliminary Constitution of seven articles was adopted and recommended to the several states for their consideration. Without doubt, it was clear in the New York meeting that a freely representative convention would exercise final authority in Church matters, and not a convocation of bishops.

Thus, the stage is set for the first General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United of America, to start on September 27, 1785, in Christ Church, Philadelphia, and to adjourn October 7 of the same year.

Samuel Seabury did not attend the first General Convention, nor did the leaders of the church in Connecticut, though invited. Samuel Parker from Massachusetts did not attend. Parker agreed with the concept of lay participation in the conventions, but did not wish to see Seabury’s status become that of an ex officio member of General Convention, as put forward in Article V of the preliminary Constitution adopted in New York.

Consisting of one House composed of sixteen presbyters and twenty-six laity from seven states, the first General Convention approved six of the seven Articles proposed in New York. Article IV on liturgy was referred to a study committee. One clergy, one layperson from each state was

appointed to a committee to prepare a Constitution, review the liturgy, and establish a plan to obtain Episcopal consecration for bishops elected by a state convention. After adopting all eleven Articles of the Constitution based on the "New York VII", the Convention accepted a plan for securing bishops in the English line, while circumscribing their duties and titles. Article VI of the new Constitution restricted bishops to their own state and Article VIII, which gave power to the state conventions to suspend and remove bishops all but insured a split in the newly organizing Church and Seabury's absence from the General Convention.

Before the second General Convention met in June 26, 1786 in Philadelphia, three states elected bishops: Samuel Provost in New York, William White in Pennsylvania, and David Griffith in Virginia. The later received no assistance whatsoever or financial aid in terms of forwarding his consecration to the Episcopacy. It was a very strange thing in Virginia – the funds just simply dried up, after electing him by a very, very small margin. The second Convention amended Article VIII so that at a trial of a bishop, only a bishop should pronounce sentence. Although there were several attempts to show displeasure with Samuel Seabury at the 1785 and 1786 Conventions, there was a beginning towards negotiation and reconciliation, as seen in the amending of Article VIII. Following the October 10 and 11, 1786 meeting, White and Provost, with proper credentials from both state and Convention, were consecrated in Lambeth Palace and returned shortly to America.

A great deal of diplomatic negotiating took place in the interim between 1786 and the General Convention of 1789, in order to avoid schism within the American Church. At the first session of the 1789 Convention, Samuel Seabury was not in attendance. The Convention passed a number of favorable resolutions toward the Connecticut bishop, which were based primarily on practical considerations rather than historical or theological tradition. Article II of the Constitution was amended to allow state conventions to send delegations to General Convention with or without lay representation. Article V was amended to recognize a separate House of Bishops, if three or more bishops were in attendance.

An adjourned meeting of Convention was set for September 29, 1789, with thirty-one deputies from nine states, including Seabury, the Connecticut clergy, and Parker from Massachusetts in attendance. The Constitution was amended, the liturgy was revised, Canons were written. For the first time, the House of Revision, or the House of Bishops as we now know it, met when White joined Seabury after the seating of the Connecticut clergy in the House of Deputies.

The Episcopal order was finally and completely established in the mind of the English Church, when James Madison, Bishop-Elect of Virginia was consecrated in Lambeth Palace in 1790, and joined with White, Provost, and Seabury in consecrating Thomas J. Clagget of Maryland in 1792. Interestingly enough, the question was asked as to whether the English bishops would concur with joint English/Scottish consecrations in the American line. No written answer was ever received to that query, only, it would seem, the answer was received in the consecration of James Madison.

True to our nature, even the Episcopal Church Annual seems to show the intention of the early American Church. In the back of that publication, each American bishop is listed in the order of his consecration and chief consecrator and two co-consecrators are listed following. Even though Madison joined White, Provost, and Seabury, Madison being the third bishop in the English line, the Annual lists the consecrators of Thomas J. Clagget as numbers 3, 1, and 2: Provost as Chief Consecrator with Seabury and White as co-consecrators.

Thus we have the General Convention of the Episcopal Church, A.D. 1785, established with a Constitution, two Houses with checks and balances, and with concurrent vote of both Houses to establish Canons or to adopt resolutions. From White's Case and the Fundamental Principles, the 1789 Convention established and organized our Church, basically accepting these principles, with the addition of Seabury's insistence on the House of Bishops which sat separate and apart, but equal with the House of Deputies composed of White's clergy and laity acting co-jointly.

Lecture II

The History of The General Convention

I purposely did not go back into my files to ascertain the exact source of three very descriptive words used in reference to the House of Deputies at the 66th General meeting in Denver in 1979. I shall assume the words came from one of the seminary students from the School Theology at Sewanee, almost three years ago, and who now probably is doing a superb educational job with his congregation in terms of understanding of the role of the General Convention.

The words to which I refer were included in an assigned report on the 66th General Convention. I must also say that the student body did a very good job in Denver. I was pleased, both before and following Denver to have assisted Professor Killen and either the Middler or Senior class in attending the General Convention in 1979. I tried to provide the opportunities for as many helpful learning experiences as was possible. I must also add that Professor Killen has been very helpful to the Executive Officer of General Convention on several occasions.

Oh yes, those three very descriptive words I mentioned: in reading a student's report of the 1979 Convention, one very honest seminarian described the House of Deputies as he viewed it as "a beached whale". I am not sure I would agree with those words if they were to stand alone without qualifiers. There have been times, as I sat on the dais at General Convention, when I was provided with an understanding of this singular viewpoint; but only if I were to separate one small section/portion of the legislative time from the total.

In any case, the three descriptive words did cause some discussion, and a comment from an ardent deputy who said, in rebuttal, "This student already has his eyes on a purple shirt and the other House."

In these next two lectures, I propose to speak about the structure and life of the General Convention today, and then attempt to gaze into the future as to what the conventions might be or become as we contemplate some proposals that will go to the 67th General convention in New Orleans in September.

Before we can move all the way from 1789 to 1982, we first must make two stops along the way to note two important events, and one in particular, that have greatly affected the governance of the General Convention and the Church.

Time could well be spent on the myriad changes – canonical and constitutional – that have taken place in and through the General Convention since 1789. But I fear it is impossible to do so within the confines of these lectures, for time simply will not allow us the luxury. Sufficient, I think, for our purposes, is to identify the two events which moved the General Convention to its present structure.

I am sure I need not remind you of the early American churchmen's desire to contract for a federal type of polity for the General Convention – being a form of unitary government which suggests being composed of several parts, or several houses, or several states. And that these several states, or in our case – the two Houses of General Convention – are equal, and none of the parts, or again in our case – one House – cannot function or operate without the other. Paramount in this contract form of polity was the insistence that each constituency is represented by an equal vote and the center of authority is devolved over a number of individuals or their

representatives. There was and indeed there still is a strong states' rights theory of polity within the General Convention. It is easily seen when someone suggests a proportional representation of deputies based on the communicant size of a diocese. It would be surprising if such a resolution were to receive a concurrent majority of the Houses.

The polity being federal and de-centralized, it was not until the first "Special General Convention" of 1821 (the second and only other one being the Special General Convention of 1969 at South Bend, Indiana) adopted the constitution of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America.

In Volume 1 of White and Dykman's Annotated Constitution and Canons, you will read the following:

As early as 1808 the subject of domestic missions was considered in General Convention, when a committee appointed to address the Church at large on certain matters was "authorized and desired to consider and determine on the proper mode of sending a Bishop in said States and Territories." Meaning thereby those states and territories in which the Church was not yet organized.

CONVENTION of 1820

This Convention took the first real step toward promoting the cause of missions by establishing "The Protestant Episcopal Missionary Society in the United States for Foreign and Domestic Missions," and adopting a Constitution for such Society.

As Dykman says, "This Constitution was so imperfect that no action could be taken under it, and it was repealed by the special convention held in the following year." Dykman felt that further explanation was hardly worth printing in the Annotated Constitution and Canons.

As the Constitution for the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society was amended and changed down through the several Conventions, a Board of Missions was established, the election of various members to the Board was carried out through appointment by a concurrent vote, "Such persons as were patrons of the Society before a meeting of the General Convention shall be called the Board of Missions of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States". That Board of Missions was entrusted with the supervision of general missionary operations of the Church, with power to establish missionary stations, appoint missionaries, make appropriations of money, as well as to regulate the conducting of missions, filling vacancies which may occur, and to enact by-laws which the Board of Missions felt necessary for their own government and the government of their committees.

As White and Dykman put forward in their exposition on Canon 3, "The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society is a corporate body of the national Church, General Convention not being incorporated, and until the formation of the Episcopal Church Foundation in 1949, the only corporate body for the receipt of gifts and legacies for administration by national authority. It was not, however, until fifty years after the Missionary Society had been established that the General Convention in 1871 enacted a mission canon, and not until 1877 was the Constitution of the Missionary Society enacted into canon."

You need to remember also, that during the first real step towards centralization in the life of the Church, there was considerable discussion of the role of the "Presiding" Bishop and exactly the kind of authority he might exercise, as that Presiding Bishop. As the Church slowly moved toward a more centralized organizational structure, independent and quite separate Boards were

established to carry out its mission, education, and social service responsibilities. This, of course, did not happen overnight. An interesting aspect of these various Boards, once they were established, was that they had very little inter-relationship with each other. With regard to the Board of Missions, there was very little support directed toward that Society for Missions, and little was done for it until 1835. In that year, the General Convention adopted two great principles which expressed the visible knowledge of necessary support and backing:

- a) That all baptized members of the Church are members of the Society, and
- b) The whole world was the Society's field.

The other event of which I have spoken is the passage of Canon 60, as it has been referred to in the life of the Church. Without a doubt, Canon 60, with the amendments made to that Canon in 1922, produced the greatest changes in the Episcopal Church from 1789 and following. Canon 60 established a bishop and Council for the National Church. White and Dykman wrote that Canon 60 marked "a greater change in the policy of the American Church than any other canon ever enacted by General Convention, and is one of the greatest pieces of constructive legislation, if not the greatest, ever enacted by that body since the Convention of 1789."

The similarity between our nation and our Church in the early years, as evidenced by both Constitutions, existed for only a short time. The Executive branch of government grew fairly rapidly after a time, but the Church did not ascribe such powers of central control to any ecclesiastical body. William White's Sixth Principle seems to have been well established. The only unifying structure for a long period of time, prior to Canon 60, was the General Convention and its function was chiefly legislative.

It was, as it were, with one great sweeping movement of a very large hand, that General Convention erased all its past traditions with regard to an Executive form of government, and with Canon 60, moved in one giant step to a strong centralized government. It gave to the then "National Council" and the Presiding Bishop the execution of whatever work General Convention might commit to it, as well as the "power to initiate and develop such new work as it may deem necessary."

There have been many discussions, if not debates, in regard to the meaning of this last phrase (some feel that it is the most important phrase). There are those who would argue that when the program budget of the National Church is adopted by the Convention, it establishes the direction for the Council and circumscribes its activities. Others have argued, that in addition the Council should reflect the mind of the Convention when adopting any new work. That "mind", it is felt, is determined by the whole body of legislation and the general subjects and results of debate in both Houses.

In reality, the Presiding Bishop and Council are restricted only by the provisions of the Constitutions and Canons, and such directions as may be given to them by the General Convention. The power of the Council to spend money and undertake new work has remained the same since the Canon was adopted in 1922, although there have been efforts to curtail it.

The name of the National Council was changed in 1964 by amending Canon 4, without waiting for constitutional action, which final action took place in 1967. The name was changed to the Executive Council, and in 1976, Canon 4 was further amended to read the Executive Council of the General Convention. The initiation for a change of name came through a resolution from the National Council, being fully aware that many of the pronouncements being made by the

National Council of Churches were being ascribed to the Episcopal Church's National Council. The Council wanted to receive credit only for their own statements and actions. Interestingly enough, it was in 1964 in St. Louis, that the Convention passed a resolution outlining levels of authority, or who may speak for the Church.

It is an over-simplification but I would like to stress for your understanding that the General Convention, from 1789 until the passage of the new missionary canon in Detroit in 1919 and the Council's first meeting on November 25, 1919, in Washington, D.C., was really a de-centralized unitary type structure. The General Convention, utilizing the federal type of polity, changed very little during that whole period. The concept of centralization, therefore, is relatively new, even following the passage of the new missionary canon, and the formation of the National Council with a Presiding Bishop as the head of that Council. Most of the Presiding Bishops elected during that period were elected under the rule of the "bishop with the most seniority," and as a result, there was a rapid change in that office. Most of the bishops who were elected to the office of the Presiding Bishop were well advanced in age when they took that post.

The Rev. Canon Charles M. Guilbert, in his Johnson Lectures at Seabury Western Seminary in 1981, wrote:

"Of the eleven senior Bishops who successively served as Presiding Bishop, after the long incumbency of Bishop White, only two (Philander Chase of Illinois, 1943-1852, and Daniel Sylvester Tuttle, 1903-1923) were under 69 years of age when they entered upon their presidencies. Most were in their seventies; one (Ethelbert Talbot of Bethlehem, 1924-1925) was 86 years old when he succeeded Alexander Charles Garrett, 1923-24, who was 91 years of age and the oldest Bishop of the entire Anglican Communion."

The process to change the method of selecting the Presiding Bishop began a very lengthy and difficult legislative journey with the 1901 General Convention; the goal being the election of a Presiding Bishop as opposed to having seniority determine that fact.

Canon Guilbert continues:

"In 1913 and again 1916, the House of Bishops withheld concurrence because of discerned defects in the proposals: first, there was no provision for the specification by Canon of duties and term of office, and then provision was lacking or succession to the office in the event of the death of the incumbent. These defects having been corrected, the Convention of 1916 proposed a refined amendment, and referred it to the Convention of 1919, at which time it was finally adopted. Although the Article has since been amended, the principle of a Presiding Bishop, elected by the House of Bishops and confirmed by the House of Deputies, was firmly established and still prevails."

The election of a Presiding Bishop, however, did not take place for the first time until the General Convention in 1925 in New Orleans. It was at this point in our history that the increased responsibilities of a Presiding Bishop began to evolve to the present time through the recommendations made by the Mutual Responsibility Commission at the 1967 General Convention.

Thus, it is important to remember that the phenomenon of centralization has been present in the real experience and the life of the Church in only the last twenty-five to thirty-five years. During that time, the understanding in regard to the role of the Presiding Bishop's Staff at the Church Center was that the Staff belonged to the Executive Council to do their work, ad interim the

meetings of the Executive Council, but today, and properly so, it is usually understood that the Staff is indeed the Staff of the Presiding Bishop to be utilized not only by the Executive Council but by the entire Church to assist the whole Church in the accomplishment of ministry and mission.

To describe the structure of the General Convention and of the Episcopal Church as it exists today, in any manner, is to over-simplify, by way of explanation, that structure, because human inter-action and inter-personal relationships, supported both by faith and conviction, make any description quite inadequate.

As the highest legislative body of the Episcopal Church, the General Convention is a bi-cameral legislative body consisting of two Houses: the House of Bishops and the House of Deputies. The senior House, the House of Deputies, consists of no less than two and no more than four deputies in each order, lay and clerical, representing ninety-five domestic dioceses, seventeen overseas dioceses and one Convocation of the American Churches in Europe – now excluding Costa Rica and Puerto Rico as well as Liberia. By action of the 1979 General Convention, the Diocese of Liberia and the Navaho Area Mission are entitled to special seating and voice on the floor of Convention, but not vote. These ninety-five domestic and seventeen missionary dioceses and one Convocation are grouped together in nine geographical areas called Provinces, with a number of the extra-territorial dioceses now being included in the meetings of at least one of the Provinces. The House of Bishops consists of diocesans, co-adjutors, suffragans, assistant, retired, and resigned bishops, as well as the Presiding Bishop and Staff Bishops of the Episcopal Church Center. Each has a seat, voice and vote in that House. There are a number of collegial bishops given seat and voice from time to time. The General Convention of the Episcopal Church meets triennially.

Legislative matters are proposed by Interim Bodies of the General Convention, being the several Committees, Commissions, Boards, and Agencies created by the Convention to accomplish specific tasks prescribed either by their charter in canon or by resolution. These Committees, Commissions, Boards, and Agencies are referred to as Interim Bodies of General Convention, to assist in recognizing and differentiating these bodies created by General Convention (with the sole purpose of reporting to it) from the Committees and Commissions of the Executive Council, which are created by Council, for its work. Likewise, there is a third group of Committees called Legislative Committees, some of whose names are identical to those of the Interim Bodies. The Legislative Committees function and operate only during the time of the General Convention, save for three, the Joint Standing Committees on Nominations; Planning and Arrangements; and Program, Budget and Finance. These function both during legislative session and ad interim the General Convention.

There are nineteen Interim Bodies of General Convention, the membership of which, by and large, is appointed by the two Presiding Officers, i.e., the Presiding Bishop and the President of the House of Deputies. The Presiding Bishop appoints the Episcopal members and the President of the House of Deputies appoints the clerical and lay members. Three bishops, three priests or deacons, and six lay persons are appointed to most Interim Bodies. The length of term is usually six years, with approximately one-half of the Committee or Commission rotating off following each General Convention.

If the Interim Body is a Joint Standing Committee, its membership must be composed of members of the General Convention since, in most instances, the work of a Joint Standing Committee is directly related to actual work of the Convention itself. Bishops, of course, are

automatically given a seat in the House of Bishops at their consecration when the testimonial of the Secretary of the House of Bishops is read. Clergy and lay, however, must be elected for each Convention to remain on a Joint Standing Committee. Appointments to Joint Standing Committees, therefore, are for one triennium only. The membership enumerated in the Joint Rules of Order; Program, Budget and Finance has thirty-six members; one episcopal, one clerical, and two lay from each Province; and Nominations has twelve members.

If a Commission is “Standing,” it has not only standard membership, but its charter is recorded in the Canons. There are ten such Standing Commissions.

If a Commission is simply “Joint,” and not “Standing,” it is established by resolution of Convention and its task/charter is recorded therein. That task or charter must be renewed by resolution at each Convention if it is to be continued. There is one such Joint Commission.

Of the three Boards of General Convention, the Convention either elects or confirms the appointment of membership, while Convention is in session, and the membership of each is quite varied because of the tasks of the Boards. Two of the three boards, the General Board of Examining Chaplains and the Board for Theological Education, are listed in the canons and are continuing Boards. The Board for Church Deployment is created and continued by resolution (they plan to submit an amendment to the Canons similar to that already in existence for the Board for Theological Education at the 67th General Convention).

The one remaining unique group is the House of Bishops Pastoral Development Committee, created by the House of Bishops. The work of the Committee is funded by the assessment budget of General Convention and funds raised through bishops; their program through the general program of the Church, and they report to the House of Bishops.

There is one Agency, the Council for the Development of Ministry, an umbrella organization dealing with all groups involved with ministry, which is continued by resolution of General Convention and reports to the Convention as do all Interim Bodies. It is funded by the program budget of Executive Council, and it elects its own membership.

All these Interim Bodies report directly to the General Convention through what is called the Blue Book, which contains a written report of all the work of each Interim Body, its research and findings along with any resolutions they might wish to present. Interim Bodies provide a great deal of legislative grist for the Convention mill, since their primary task is in the area of policy development and legislation. Interim Bodies are not equipped nor chartered to be involved in program execution. This responsibility is given to the Executive Council, the Presiding Bishop, and his staff.

The reports of all the Interim Bodies of General Convention, by Joint Rule or Order, are to be submitted to the Secretary of General Convention not later than April 1 of the year in which the Convention is held. The Secretary produces the Blue Book containing all these reports and resolutions, and makes copies of the Blue Book available to all bishops and deputies approximately three months prior to the opening of Convention, so that members of both Houses may be thoroughly familiar with the work of these nineteen agencies reporting to them.

The Interim Bodies are one source of legislation (resolutions in the Blue Book are identified with a legislative source number “A”), but they are not the only source of legislation. Rule 21 of the Rules of Order of the House of Deputies, page 150 of the Constitution and Canons, 1979, reads:

- (b.) Resolutions may be introduced only by:

- (1) Deputies
- (2) Dioceses and Missionary Dioceses
- (3) Standing and Joint Commissions
- (4) Standing, Joint, and Legislative Committees
- (5) The Executive Council
- (6) Other Boards and Agencies created by and required to report to the General Convention.
- (7) The House of Bishops by Messages

Each of these groups is assigned a letter to designate the source of each piece of legislation.

“B” resolutions come from Bishops

“C” resolutions come from Dioceses and Missionary Dioceses

“D” resolutions come from Deputies

Executive Council resolutions receive “A” designations.

“M” designates a Memorial, which does not require legislative action, but is submitted for information only, to the cognate legislative committees. Individuals, or parishes, or other organizations may submit resolutions either by having their resolution passed at a diocesan convention or having their representative – a bishop or a deputy from their diocese – submit that resolution under the name of their representative. Any organization may submit a Memorial to the General Convention (H.D. Rule #22, page 151.)

Resolutions may be pre-filed before the Convention begins until June 6, in 1982 or through the third legislative day in the House of Deputies, the fifth legislative day in the House of Bishops. The Presiding Officers (the Presiding Bishop and the President of the House of Deputies) designate in which House each resolution will originate, and to which of the twenty-two cognate legislative committees (or special legislative committees which may be appointed) such legislation will be assigned. Ordinarily, a resolution may not be acted upon in either House unless presented to the floor of that House by legislative committee. When favorably acted upon in the initiating House, and concurred with by the other House, enactment of that legislative matter is accomplished.

It is quite important to realize that if any alacrity in the House of Deputies is to be realized (no doubt a non sequitor for those espousing the “beached whale” concept); one needs to understand the paramount importance of the legislative committees of each House. One needs to understand the necessity for the cognate committees of the two Houses, each exercising its own integrity, to meet together from time to time in order to expedite the legislation assigned to them.

All resolutions are assigned to a legislative committee, and that committee may act on those resolutions in any way they deem appropriate. All resolutions come to the floor for debate and action only through a legislative committee report, except that, by Rules of Order, a resolution may, in certain instances, be acted upon immediately.

During the time James Winning, Esq. served as John Coburn’s Parliamentarian, and the Hon. Hugh Jones as Chairman of Dispatch of Business, greater emphasis was placed on the work of

these committees through Mr. Winning and Judge Jones' guidance and through the House (of Deputies) Committee on Rules of Order, to the point that the necessity for extended debate on all issues might become unnecessary. I am certain that the thirty to forty-five persons who usually speak on the floor of the House of Deputies will continue to do so, regardless what Convention one might attend. Also the Hon. George T. Shields, presently Chairman of the Dispatch of Business Committee of the House of Deputies, developed a Consent Calendar, which has assisted and will assist even more in future Conventions, the elimination of debating pro-forma resolutions, since such resolutions placed on the consent Calendar have the unanimous approval of the legislative committee to which it was referred.

If the length of the General Convention is to be shortened, one thing which will help more than any other will be the excellent work and the co-ordination of legislative committees of both Houses, as well as their conferencing together early in the Convention.

It must be understood, however, in all the stream-lining or change that might be accomplished in dealing with the General Convention legislative process, the mind of either House may not be willing to move on a specific issue. If that be the case, I know of nothing that will move the House to affirmative action. There are enough checks and balances available, so that if an issue is passed, it is indeed the mind of the Convention. One need only remember the inordinate length of time (whether appropriate or inappropriate is not the question for this discussion) it took the Convention to admit women to the floor of the House of Deputies. The debate and discussion during this time tended to point out the cumbersomeness of the House of Deputies, with its ever-increasing size. Also, the quality of debate in either House was and is usually related to those in each House who speak most often. But it must be remembered, these are the elected bishops and deputies from the several dioceses of the Church, and by and large, reflect their constituents' understandings.

Concurrent actions of General Convention normally give program matters to its executive branch, that is, the Executive Council of the General Convention, with ultimate responsibility for the implementation of such policy and strategy given to the Presiding Bishop and his staff at the Episcopal Church Center.

The Canons, for some, may appear to be somewhat confusing on this point, when they deal with the work given to the Presiding Bishop, and the Executive Council at each General Convention. Title I, Canon 4, Section 1., says:

(a.) There shall be an Executive Council of the General Convention (which council shall generally be called simply the Executive Council) whose duty it shall be to carry out the program and policies adopted by the General Convention. The Executive Council shall have charge of the unification, development, and prosecution of the Missionary, Educational, and Social Work of the Church, and of such other work as may be committed to it by the General Convention.

(b.) The Executive Council shall be accountable to the General Convention and shall render a full report concerning the work with which it is charged to each meeting of the said Convention.

Title I, Canon 2, Section 4 (a.), subsection 1 clearly sets forth what has come to be known as the "metropolitan authority of the Primate of the Church, the Presiding Bishop," as it has recently been developed.

In the same Johnson Lectures given at Seabury Western Theological Seminary to which I have referred previously in this lecture, one notes with interest some of Dr. Guilbert's comments regarding metropolitanical character. Nowhere in the Canons is the word 'metropolitanical' used, and nowhere has it been defined in the American Church, save through documents from the Anglican Consultative Council, which have defined "metropolitanical authority." Guilbert writes.

"It would be an interesting exercise to examine the Journals of the General Convention in this century to determine the number of times resolutions have been introduced and defeated to designate the Presiding Bishop of the Church as Archbishop, or Metropolitan, or Primate."

He continues:

"I have not made such a search but I can recall a number of instances just in the thirty years that I have been attending Convention. To my mind, a change of nomenclature, even if desirable, is irrelevant; what is important is the scope, extent, and authority of the office.

"Granted that the office of the Presiding Bishop is a constitutional and canonical creation, having no theological, historical, or traditional precedence, and lacking the inherent properties which come with jurisdiction over a metropolitanical see, nevertheless, the Episcopal Church has, over the years, successively invested in the office elements which pertain to the metropolitanical authority."

Even though some of the elements now ascribed as metropolitanical authority to the Presiding Bishop have been exercised in former times, the addition of other elements and the bringing of those elements together in one place so that they could readily be identified and listed did not take place until 1967, when Canon 2 "Of the Presiding Bishop" was amended to bring together those clearly defined duties of the Presiding Bishop, under the rubric "Chief Pastor of the Church." At the same Convention, following the recommendations of the Mutual Responsibility and Inter-Dependence Commission, most recommendations put forward by this body were adopted by the 1967 General Convention to establish or strengthen the relationship between the three major ecclesiastical groups within the Church, namely, the General Convention, the Presiding Bishop, and the Executive Council.

The Commission recommended that the Council be responsible to act on behalf of the General Convention in the interim thereof. This suggestion was amended quite substantially to read as it now reads in the present Canons, "...to carry out the programs and policies adopted by the General Convention..." The whole question of quasi-legislative powers of the Council was raised as an issue at the General Convention.

With this background and understanding regarding the role and responsibility of the Executive Council, I now quote the Canon which refers to the Presiding Bishop's responsibility as chief pastor:

Title I, Canon 2, Section 4(a). The Presiding Bishop of the Church shall be the chief pastor thereof. As such he shall

- (1) Be charged with responsibility for leadership in initiating and developing the policy and strategy of the Church and, as Chairman of the Executive Council of General Convention, with ultimate responsibility for

the implementation of such policy and strategy through the conduct of policies and programs authorized by the General Convention or approved by the Executive Council of the General Convention.

Without question, Canon 4 says the Executive Council's duty is to carry out the program and policies adopted by the General Convention, and shall have charge of the unification, development, and prosecution of educational, social and missionary work of the Church. The charge in Title I, Canon 2, Section 4 (a) speaks of leadership of the Presiding Bishop in initiating and developing policies and strategies of the Church with ultimate responsibilities for implementation of such policies and strategies, through the conduct of policies and programs authorized by the Convention and the Council.

For some, it is very clear and plain that there is a difference, and a clear demarcation of goals, tasks, and responsibilities. Yet from time to time, education is required. Education and orientation periods are required to illustrate just how the three foci of ecclesiastical leadership function. Each indeed has its part; each indeed has its own responsibility, and together can work well in accomplishing the mission and ministry of the Church.

Concurrent actions of the General Convention which deal with research and/or study are given to the Interim Bodies of General Convention along with major subjects considered to be of continuing concern to the Church. The work of the Interim Bodies is really quite essential, and if the Convention is made shorter, their work will become even more essential to accomplish those investigations which provide knowledge for the two Houses and provide, thereby, a basis for their legislative decisions.

Examples of concurrent actions of General Convention are as follows:

1. Old canons amended or new canons adopted.
2. The adoption of a general Church program budget for the Executive Council, whose duty it is to carry out the policies adopted by the Convention.
3. The adoption of an expense budget for the operation of the Presiding Bishop's office, the Interim Bodies, and the Executive Office of General Convention.
4. Position or policy statements of the Church.
5. Specific assignments or directions to Interim Bodies to be accomplished during the triennium, in addition to their canonical charges.
6. The adoption of specific assignments or requests to the Executive Council in program development areas.
7. Constitutional amendments (passage at two successive Conventions is necessary).
8. Other resolutions expressing the mind of the Church to the world or to the several dioceses of the American Church, and asking for specific action by the designated body.

In William White's The Case, written in 1782, it is set forward, and exists until this time, the principle that

“... every communicant or member of the Church has a right to participate in the development of Church government through the parish delegate to the diocesan convention.” This fundamental principle is important for the Church to understand as

well as use. Each person in this Church may, if he or she desires, attend the General Convention; sit in the “Visitors’ Gallery” of either House; follow debate; attend open hearings; register as a visitor as well as a speaker at any of the twenty-two legislative committees or special committees if that member has something he or she wishes to present; or may simply attend the legislative committee meetings, except in all instances mentioned above, when Executive Sessions are called in either House or in any of the legislative committees.

The General Convention is really open to the Church, as are meetings of all Interim Bodies. Title I, Canon 1.2(i) states:

It shall be the duty of each Commission to give appropriate notice in the Church press of issues before it and the time and place of meetings at which such issues are to be considered, together with instructions as to the manner in which members of the Church may address their views to such Commission.

A similar Rule of Order exists for legislative committees during the sessions of General Convention.

People usually think me overly generous when I state that possibly five percent of Episcopalians know, let alone care about the General Convention and what it really is. Oh, it is true, every three years almost every clergyman canonically resident in a diocese is nominated to be a deputy to the Convention, but on more than one occasion, the laity who are asked to make the nomination of the clergyman wonders, publicly and verbally, why their priest wants to go to this particular meeting. Often, the lay person is left with the impression that it’s a nice trip, and Father deserves a couple of weeks in New Orleans or where ever the Convention meets, and that’s the extent of knowledge and understanding.

If the General Convention is going to continue to be more than an exorbitantly expensive “Grand Gathering of the Episcopal Clan”, where the few speak to the many on all issues, there must be a concerted educational effort accomplished so that appropriate responsibilities may be assigned and accepted on the local and parish level. If the General Convention is to continue to be more than the passage of so many resolutions which no one knows of, education and involvement in the whole legislative process is quite necessary.

As John Woolverton in his review of the Mills book so aptly stated it, “Today in the Episcopal Church in particular and in the Anglican Church in general, there is a tendency to ignore the late eighteenth century lesson of American ecclesiastical democracy. This tendency is manifested, for example, ... in the action of the House of Bishops taken apart from the laity and clergy of General Convention in announcing a “conscience clause” for those clerics opposed to the legally approved ordination of women. Moreover, the increasing authority of the Lambeth Conference of Anglican Bishops, the move to have Anglican prelates meet bi-annually, apart from the clergy and laity of the Anglican Consultative Council – and the casual talk at Lambeth, 1978, of freeing the Archbishop of Canterbury from both his diocesan and national responsibilities in England and become a sort of Anglican pope, all serve to show how little the lessons of the 1780’s have been learned.”

The legislative process, and indeed, the structure of the General Convention and the Church, begin and end for all practical purposes with the local congregation. If understanding and commitment are not finally at this level, precious little will be accomplished. Allow me an example:

A specific resolution has been passed at least at the last three meetings of the General Convention. This resolution affects, as of this moment, the way certain things are accomplished on both the diocesan and congregational levels of the Church. The resolution passed was The Lund Principle. Of course, you all immediately know what I'm talking about. If you don't, or if your diocese and parish are not aware and involved in the utilization of this principle, it would be a good idea to ask your bishop and your deputies about it to see if it has any relevancy for either area, since all dioceses and parishes are called upon to utilize this principle.

In the final analysis, it will be the clergy of the Church, being informed about the highest legislative authority of the Church and its structure, that will enable others to know, understand, and become educators themselves. Not until the election of deputies to General Convention becomes serious business in a diocese, and the diocese sends its best people and indeed has expectations of these people as deputies, when they return, rather than an election which is a reward or a popularity contest, or it's a "your turn to go" type of situation, will the General Convention and indeed the Church function as effectively and appropriately as is possible.

The structures of the General Convention and the Church look complicated and, in some ways they are, but any system or structure may be utilized. The structure of the General Convention and of the Church is quite open and possible to influence. All one needs to do is to know it and to use it. It isn't hard at all.

PRESENT THE FOUR CHARTS AT THIS POINT

Understanding that all program matters including the program budget are sent to the Executive Council and its six Standing Committees, and all matters for study and research for the preparation of legislation are referred to Interim Bodies, the task and responsibility of the Executive Officer of General Convention as defined in Title I. Canon 1.14 is to "co-ordinate the work of the Committees, Commission, Boards and Agencies funded by the General Convention Expense Budget."

Since at the present time, the Executive Officer and the Secretary of General Convention are the same person (though they might be different people), the co-ordination of the work between the program area and the legislative area of the Church is hopefully taking place. The Secretary of the General Convention is also ex officio the Secretary of the Executive Council and meets with the Administrative Staff of the Presiding Bishop. The expectation of Structure when this connection was established was such a co-coordinating effort. It was intended to be another way of strengthening the relationships among the three areas of ecclesiastical leadership.

Lecture III

The Future of the General Convention

Having discussed the history and the present structure of the General Convention, it might be interesting to attempt to look at the future. Let us try to see, in this unstable period of high prices, high interest rates, and the ever-increasing costs of holding a General Convention, just exactly what the shape of this body-politic might become, or what it might look like in the future. In this lecture, we will deal with the physical facilities of the General Convention, as well as the results of an Ad Hoc Study Committee report to the Joint Standing Committee on Planning and Arrangements. This Ad Hoc Committee was charged by the Presiding Bishop, the Rt. Rev. John M. Allin, with developing future models, along with simpler life-styles for General Convention. Perhaps by looking at some of the suggestions to the 67th General Convention, we may garner some understandings.

Before presenting this material, however, it would be helpful to spend a few moments discussing the difference between polity/governance and order/ministry.

When we talk about the polity of the Church, I think it is incumbent upon us to understand the difference between polity and order, so that clear and appropriate decisions may be made with the least amount of confusion possible.

Polity or governance merely indicates the structure of administration which a body might adopt for the administration of its affairs. A sense of order takes in a great deal more than merely administrative rules and laws. In our thinking with regard to the General Convention, we are talking about a sense of order which cannot be completely detached from our understanding of ministry.

To clarify these two ideas of polity/governance and order/ministry, it is important to remember that Episcopal polity is often thought of as existing at two levels. At one level, polity, one could ask, "Is it a good form or method of government to have a single head in a specific area?" This is polity or governance and may be debated solely on its workability and its effectiveness. The other level involves episcopate, episcopacy, and deals with order and ministry. To put the two levels within a single question, one might ask, "In the episcopal form of polity, is it necessary to have a church in a given area led by one single officer, or by a bishop in apostolic succession?" In other words, does the chief pastor give order and continuity to the Christian community which would be lacking if that chief pastor was not in apostolic succession?

Thus, we begin to see the difference between polity/governance and order/ministry. The question that must always be placed before us when changes in structure or governance are made (and by-the-by, are usually considered only briefly, if at all) is: "Does the governance reflect, assist, enhance, or lift up order/ministry with its chief task of the propagation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ?"

Polity is an arrangement of authority, through which power, authority, and management is distributed and the work of the group is accomplished. Such things as officers, constitutions, committees, commissions, and indeed all voluntary gatherings of various individuals, groups, or agencies of the corporate group are elements or means whereby that authority or management is distributed, when speaking of polity.

The question of order is by its nature, quite a different matter. In all ecumenical discussions and in the theology of the Church, order/ministry is a gift of God to his Church and is expressive of

the very nature of the Christian community, and indeed, of the Gospel. Episcopacy is the highest exemplar of that order.

Arthur Michael Ramsey, retired Archbishop of Canterbury, described the episcopacy as a matter of order thus:

“Grace is bestowed always by our Lord Jesus Christ and through the action of His whole Church. Every act of grace is His act, and the act of the one Body which is His, and the succession of bishops is not an isolated channel of grace, since from the first, Christ bestows grace through every sacramental act of His Body. But certain actions in His work of grace are confined to the bishops; and thereby the truth is taught that every local group or church depends upon the life of the one Body, and that the Church of any generation shares in the one historic society which is not past and dead but alive in the present period. Thus the Church’s full and continuous life in grace does depend upon the succession of bishops, whose work, however, is not isolated but bound up with the Whole Body.⁴

Episcopacy in terms of order can best be seen in liturgy, and even more especially at the Holy Eucharist. With the bishop presiding, the ordered community is more than distinguishable. It must be realized that the Episcopal form of government needs to be understood not as a matter of polity or governance but as order and ministry, and is a function of the Gospel, and of the nature of the Church.

K.E. Kirk’s FORWARD to the original edition of The Apostolic Ministry, though discussing the concept of our church union, speaks to this important theological position:

“... it has become generally recognized that the crux of the whole matter is the doctrine of ministry. Is the ministry ‘from above’ or ‘from below’? Is it a gift to the Church from her Founder and Savior, or an expedient evolved by the Church to meet the exigencies of her daily life? Has it a commission transmitted in orderly sequence from the Lord Himself, or is it commissioned simply and solely by the congregation of believers among whom the minister is to serve?

“The doctrine that the ministry is embodied in its highest exemplar, the episcopate, is from above, endowed with grace and authority from on high, and not simply with delegated responsibility entrusted to it by the contemporary church, was virtually unopposed to the days of Luther.”

A great deal more time could be spent in explicating the importance of “essential ministry”, known as the episcopate and the centrality of the Gospel in the life and work of a Christian community, but again, time will not permit. It is sufficient if we have an understanding of the difference between polity/governance and order/ministry, and the realization that no matter how important governance is, it must always come out of ministry/order. It is important to understand, the polity, indeed, the General Convention with all of its rules and procedures including its Constitution and Canons, is a continuing vehicle to provide for the orthodox continuity of the “means of grace” (sacraments), and the “ministry of grace” (orders). General Convention is not a delivery system for services or even that great gathering of the Episcopal Clan. It is primarily that continuing

⁴ A.M. Ramsey, Gospel and the Catholic Church, London, Longmans and Greene and Company, 1956.

vehicle for the ordering of our affairs as a Church, the Body of Christ. Any time we contemplate a change in our systems or structures, any time we evaluate our work or our task in ministry and mission, we need to have a sense of order, not a just sense of governance. When the problems of governance are considered without a sense of order, strange things happen within the Church because our directions cannot be clear at all. Just as doctrine is the skeleton, to use a human figure, a discipline is the muscle which holds it together and provides movement, so it is with order and polity.

With this in mind, I propose now to spend a few moments looking at the physical needs of General Convention. What is required in order to accommodate this creature of history known as the highest legislative authority of the Episcopal Church? The Joint Standing Committee on Planning and Arrangements asked the General Convention Manager, Mr. Bob N. Wallace, in preparation for the 66th General Convention, to answer the perennial question regarding the utilization of college campuses for General Convention meetings. In a query to all colleges or universities with a resident student body of over five thousand, Mr. Wallace prepared an extensive list of physical requirements. I share only eight of those listed, to give you some comprehension of the General Convention's size and requirements.

1. 3,500 sleeping rooms, half of which should be private room accommodations. The number of private baths should equal the number of rooms; if not, the ratio should be indicated. Rooms needed 18-20 days. Full service needed.
2. Three meals daily for between 5,000 to 8,000 persons. In addition, 250 organized food and beverage functions throughout the period of 13 days. The times for daily meals would have to be from 6AM until 8PM daily, with possible extensions for even later meals.
3. Dates of availability should be 13 days for the General Convention meeting, 10 days for set-up and four days for move-out. This would be a total of 27 days needed in July or August.
4. The number of chairs, tables, desks, sound equipment, risers, platforms and other items in your inventory should be indicated together with the charge for rental, if any. Also, any charge for labor set-up and removal should be shown. Our needs are as follows:

a. Tables (18' x 30')	800
b. Chairs (cushioned bottoms and backs)	7,000
c. Platform staging	3,000 sq. ft.
d. Seating risers	4,000 people
e. Desks (executive and typing)	50

Type of loading and unloading facilities available to support minimum of 14 tractor trailers.

5. Space requirements:
 - a. House of Deputies 50,000 sq. ft.

- b. House of Bishops 9,000 sq. ft
 - c. Triennial 20,000 sq. ft.
 - d. 45 to 50 conference rooms and offices varying from
1,400 sq. ft – 5, 600 sq. ft
 - e. Worship services 7,500 to 10,000 seats
6. 24 hour accessibility into a number of office spaces.
 7. Sufficient electrical capability in some areas to support numerous electrical machines, typewriters, recorders, computers, etc.
 8. Type of security services available to provide 24 hour security of all spaces.

Of the 172 inquiries sent to university campuses, 93 responses were received by the General Convention Manager, a 55 percent response-factor. Of those 93 responses, six campuses met the minimum space requirements for a General Convention. It is important to realize, without enumerating all the differences, that life would indeed be different on a college campus for most of those attending General Convention, than in a “name” hotel in the center of a thriving city.

The six universities responding to the request were:

Cornell University, Ithaca, New York

University of Illinois at Urbana/Champaign, Illinois

Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio

Ohio University, Athens, Ohio

Western Illinois University, Macomb, Illinois

University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh, Wisconsin

A regular meeting of the General Convention involves approximately five thousand people, including registered visitors. Depending on the number of visitors who come, the number just quoted could go to as high as 20,000. The General Convention will be meeting for ten days at New Orleans, having cut back approximately two days from former Conventions. The cost for hotel rooms has gone from an average cost of \$17.45 for a double room in Louisville in 1973 to an average cost of \$75.33 in 1982 in New Orleans.

Without question, the national economy will have a direct relationship to the cost of General Convention, and costs of hotel rooms and labor, food and transportation, equipment rentals, and utility costs could have a dramatic effect on the cost of holding a General Convention.

At the present time, approximately one third of the domestic dioceses will be spending more to send eight deputies to the General Convention in New Orleans than they were assessed for all the three years of the present assessment budget of General Convention.

Without dioceses continuing to divide, the Diocese of Tennessee being a good example, the numbers attending the General Convention will continue to grow. As long as dioceses continue to insist on sending four deputies in each order, and in some cases, sending a whole complement of alternate deputies, the General Convention will be limited in the places it may choose to hold its meeting. Even though my numbers cannot be accurate in terms of utilization of alternate

deputies, for the simple reason that one deputy may enter and re-enter several times with the same alternate, nevertheless there is a thirty percent turnover on the floor of the House of Deputies during legislative sessions, during any one triennial meeting of the Convention. In some respects, the reduction of costs will be entirely dependent upon the dioceses themselves, and on the type of self-discipline exercised by those dioceses.

As a result of resolutions B-137 and C-36 of the 66th General Convention, the Joint Standing Committee on Planning and Arrangements was charged by the Presiding Bishop in this present triennium with the task of preparing a comprehensive plan for the implementation of these two resolutions and for presentation to the 67th General Convention.

The resolutions of the 66th General Convention state:

B-137

Resolved, That this General Convention directs its Convention planners to continue their efforts to simplify housing and feeding provided at the next succeeding General Convention; and be it further

Resolved, That all members of this Convention are encouraged to forward suggestions to accomplish this simplification to the Joint Standing Committee in care of the Secretary of General Convention.⁵

C-36

Resolved, That all national and regional meetings of this Church be dedicated to as simple a life style, in terms of housing, board and energy utilization, as possible.⁶

The Presiding Bishop charged the Joint Standing Committee to seek a means of simplifying the lifestyle and costs to the Church and Dioceses for General Convention all so as to fully express our commitment to the stewardship of the resources of the Church.

Article I. Sec. 6. of the Constitution provides that:

The General Convention shall meet not less than once in three each years, at a time and place appointed by a preceding Convention; but if there shall appear to the Presiding Bishop, acting with the advice and consent of the Executive Council of the Church or of a successor canonical body having substantially the same powers now vested in the Executive Council, sufficient cause for changing the place or date so appointed, he, with the advice and consent of such body, shall appoint another place or date, or both, for such meeting. Special meetings may be provided for by Canon.

There are no Canons applicable to the establishment of a time and place for the meeting of the General Convention.

The Joint Rules, VI. 16. (sic) (17) provide for the establishment of a Joint Committee on Planning and Arrangements, which has the sole responsibility between Conventions for the matters indicated by its title. This Joint Committee has the duty, subject to the instructions of the General Convention, to investigate sites and make recommendations for future sites to the

⁵ Journal of the General Convention, 1979, p. c-67.

⁶ Ibid, p. C-71

General Convention, and is to study and determine the arrangements for and the nature of the Agenda of General Convention.

Accordingly, no Constitutional action is required to change, or present new models, for the General Convention. Minimal “safeguard” canonical action may be desirable, but not at all necessary.

In a simple amendment to the Joint Rules of Order, changes to the General Convention may be made.

The Joint Standing Committee will be recommending to the General Convention three specific changes to be implemented commencing with the 68th General Convention. It would recommend a fourth; the fourth recommendation will be made by the Standing Commission on the Structure of the Church.

The proposals are as follows:

1. The date of the Convention should move to the summer, when rates at many places are at the lowest. The earliest this could take place would be the General Convention of 1988. There are two times during the year when hotel rates are at their lowest. One is during the week between Christmas and New Year’s. It is firmly believed that the General Convention would not really accept this particularly time to hold a General Convention. The other time, it was discovered, that rates would be approximately half what they were any other time, would be during the week of the Fourth of July.
2. That a Convention of eight days and seven nights be held, thereby doing away with the “Blank Weekend.” This would mean not having the numerous banquets, night meetings, and other festivities often connected with the General Convention as we know it. The reduction of the actual number of legislative days would take effect as early as the Convention of 1985.
3. That the process presently used in site selection be modified. As it is now done, the Convention decides the site, and, barring emergencies, there is no necessity or reason to change it. This leaves the Convention Manager no room to maneuver, as the convention authorities in the site selected know ordinarily there is no change; and the sites are selected nine years in advance. It will be the suggestion of the Joint Standing Committee on Planning and Arrangements that it present to the 67th General Convention several alternative sites, for the 69th General Convention. Securing the approval of the General Convention for more than one, the Committee itself could then be given the authority to decide among the approved sites after negotiations with those sites. This freedom in negotiations should secure a significant reduction in costs.

If the changes proposed were to be made, using current average costs, the costs to the Dioceses for General Convention could drop from \$1,673,100 (the cost of room and board, and does not include any travel) to \$760,530. A reduction in the size of the House of Deputies would, of course, result in further reductions in costs. As it has been proposed with:

1. Few legislative days
2. Date moved to the summer, instead of September-October
3. A different site selection process.

It is estimated this model can save 54.5 percent of the estimated total cost to the members of the two Houses, under the present format and at current average rates.

If you were to look at a summary of what would be taking place as far as an over-view is concerned, it might look like this in comparison with our present format:

	<u>Present Format</u>	<u>Proposed Format</u>
Time of Convention	September	July (for New Orleans, as an example)
Total Cost to Dioceses	\$1,673,100	\$760,530
Legislative Hours	46.5	42.0
Committee Hours	19.5	19.0
Delegates (Bishops, Deputies, Triennial)	1,449	1,449

It is quite clear that economies may be achieved by changing the time and reducing the number of room-nights.

The most advantageous convention time depends on the particular site selected. For example, Anaheim's least expensive time is September, which corresponds with our traditional dates, while Detroit's would be substantially less expensive in July than in September.

One new Canon will be proposed as an addition to Title I, Canon 1 of a new section 15, which canonically spells out the process for site selection; in addition, changes in Joint Rule VI, which enlarges, to some degree, the Joint Standing Committee on Planning and Arrangements, as well as spelling out the new site selection process.

What are the ramifications of these suggestions on the polity/governance of the Church as a whole? How do these suggestions affect the order@ministry of the Church? Needless to say, if I could at this moment state exactly how this new model (devised partly, and if I am really honest, more than partly with an eye on what might be accepted by the Convention) will operate if and when fully functional, I would be far busier than one could ever imagine. It is possible, however, to make some fairly reasonable observations which might indicate one or two answers to the questions I raised.

In regard to the new model and as it will be presented, one might say, the General Convention is:

1. The primary disciplinary body through its ability to amend the Constitution and Canons of the Church;
2. An initiator of policy and program through the budgetary process, and by the adoption of resolutions calling for specific policy and program;
3. A spokesman to and for the Church in the policies enumerated by its adoption of budgets and resolutions;
4. A self-contained electoral body;

5. A good-natured and well-intentioned meddler in the details of administration of the corporate affairs.

When one thinks about the shorter time that would be given to the legislative process, especially in the House of Deputies where movement is sometimes very slow and cumbersome, and there may be a concern as to what effect psychologically or even legislatively with regard to the effect of the loss of four or five legislative hours might have on the governance of the Church. It is important to remember that there is a maxim that says, "The more time people have to fiddle with an idea, the more finite the fiddling." All of us are quite aware that people will sit in committee meetings for long periods of time and then complete all their work in the last fifteen or twenty minutes, when everybody has to leave. Whether that would be so in the House of Deputies at the General Convention, it is hard to say. But I do not think the proposed reduction of legislative hours will really have that much of a bearing on either governance/polity or on order/ministry. If we were to sit for three weeks, we could fill all of the time with some type of debate.

Of much greater importance, however, is a four-fold effect on our governance, by the changing of the number of legislative hours, the change in the time of year in which we meet, and, if it were to be passed, a reduction in the number of deputies from four to three in each order.

The four-fold effects on the General Convention in terms of governance are:

1. The concept of a three-year or triennial cycle of:
 - a. Deliberate
 - b. Delegate
 - c. Report
 - d. Deliberate

and then start the process over again every three years, should move the Convention into more forward-looking policies. The General Convention will not have time to get as involved in the nitty-gritty. Thus, the Interim Bodies of General Convention will have to work not only with a view of completing the expressed assignments given them by a General Convention for a report back to the next General Convention, the Interim Bodies will also have to be proposing more long-range policy and program alternatives than they have in the past. This will mean that the very careful selection that has gone into the Interim Body appointments will have to continue, and those appointees or members of the Interim Bodies will need to take very seriously their assignment in accomplishing the tasks given, as well as looking to the future. The most important areas will be the need to co-ordinate all Interim work. General Convention itself will have to be able to speak far more clearly, broadly, and prospectively.

2. Once General Convention has announced policy, Executive Council will have to be even more involved in carrying out policy, as well as discussing such policy. It is apparent that the Interim Bodies, the several Committees, Commissions, Boards, and Agencies, which now work concurrently with but with no accountability to the Executive Council, will have to be more closely linked to the Executive Council. Thus the Executive Council will have a greater role in coordinating policy and program.

3. The office of the Presiding Bishop, which here includes his Staff, will become more important, with regard to the providing of leadership in initiating policy and strategy. The office of the Presiding Bishop will become more important in terms of facilitating and coordination the work ad interim, rather than “doing” program. And as chief spokesman in his role as Chief Pastor, he will be more involved in presenting the policy and strategy of the Church between General Conventions.
4. The fundamental programs of the Church will once again devolve to the dioceses, and the local units – parishes, thus completing the trend now well under way due to the ravages of inflation, which some have called “de-centralization.” But nothing will have really changed in the Church if this were to happen in regard to governance/structure. Basically, it is the emphasis which will have changed more than anything else. It may well be that we are moving back to William White’s sixth fundamental principle, which is notably older than the centralized form of government which we have been experiencing for the last few years. Without a doubt, this process would involve a new recognition and a certification of the authenticity of the diocese and the individual congregations thereof.

With regard to the Executive Council’s canonical duty to carry out the programs and policies of the General Convention, under the present style of governance and with the other Interim Bodies working independently, it could be far more difficult for the Executive Council to carry out all the policies of the General Convention, if they see their role becoming involved in the minute details of problem solving exercises for all matters. Their task might well be to focus more clearly, boldly, and perspective, on the co-ordination of policy and programs to a greater degree, as well as to speak for the General Convention ad interim as the only deliberative body in session to clarify what Convention intended, as General Convention speaks more broadly.

Without some type of continuing and even increased coordination between Executive Council and the Interim Bodies, it could well be virtually impossible for the Executive Council to carry out all the policies of the Convention. If the Council were to be cut off from this preliminary policy-making group, the Interim Bodies (for example, the Board for Theological Education, World Mission, Metropolitan Areas, Standing Commission on Ecumenical Relations, etc. – all groups which formulate long-range policy now), the resulting chaos could be very devastating. Thus there is, and indeed, will need to be, a greater continued interaction between Council and the Interim Bodies, in the budget process as well as in all other areas. This, it seems to me, to be quite necessary long before reports are made to the General Convention.

With regard to the office of the Presiding Bishop, who has the responsibility to speak to the Church as prophet and shepherd, there will be increased need for coordination and the utilization of effective resource personnel to be on Staff and available to the Chief Pastor, as well as to the Executive Council, and the entire Church. The additional activities of Interim Bodies of General Convention will have to be very carefully managed in terms of finances with their increased workload, to avoid using all of the savings of a reduced General Convention for the work of the Interim Bodies.

However, with the rapidly evolving modes of communication, information storage and transmittal, and word processing, there should be, within the next few years, and indeed some of it is available at the present time, effective alternatives to the cost problems of air travel, and meetings, which problems occur at the present time. The Presiding Bishop himself will face the

certainty of having to quite a shepherd of those programs and policies, in order to keep the Church and General Convention looking beyond the typical three-year cycle.

The Diocesan and Parochial Programs have already been affected because many of those programs have already been driven back to the local level because of inflation. Many programs which were “supported on the national level” have gone back to the diocesan and local levels. This has shown up in the giving of funds, as congregations are now keeping more of the money they have and dispensing less of it away from the local level. Congregations seem to prefer having their own funds under their own direction, rather than sending it on to the diocese or the national Church. It may well be the dominant theme for the next few decades.

The sentiment is being raised more often within the Church that perhaps William White’s sixth point from his Case and fundamental principles of 1782 (which essentially provide that only that which cannot be economically or effectively accomplished on the lower level should be referred to a higher level) is not such a bad premise at all. General Convention, by establishing overall policies, programs, and visions would be the link for what will be basically a lower level effort.

Arrington Lectures 1982

University of the South

The Rev. Canon James R. Gundrum, D.D.

Executive Officer

The General Convention