

Preparing for General Convention: Things for communicators to consider

The Episcopal Church's General Convention is just around the corner. There are hundreds of resolutions to be considered. A new presiding bishop will be elected in addition to the usual election of General Convention presiding officers, at large executive committee members, trustees of General Theological Seminary, and other church wide bodies. You've a one- or maybe two- person shop. How can you possibly cover this event while also doing the rest of your job?

Nancy Davidge, a veteran of four General Conventions, offers these three tips:

Have a plan and a focus: What aspects of General Convention are your target audiences most interested in? Here are five that are expected to be of interest to many Episcopalians:

- Election of the next presiding bishop
- TREC report (Task force on restructuring the Episcopal Church)
- The budget
- Marriage task force report
- Future of Episcopal Church headquarters in New York

What else might be of interest to your audience? Did your diocese, congregation, or organization/group sponsor any resolutions? Are there resolutions related to issues that are important to your audience – perhaps resolutions related to caring for creation, social justice, or ????

Where can you find out more about what will happen at General Convention? The Public Affairs Office's [General Convention Media Kit](#) and the [website for the 78th General Convention](#) offer an overview of what will take place as well as links to the [Blue Book Reports](#) and complete information related to the [resolutions](#) being brought to convention. You'll see that resolutions can be sorted by topic, committee, or proposers as well as by resolution number. The General Convention Media Kit also offers information related to other meetings and events, such as the triennial meeting of Episcopal Church Women, the UTO ingathering, and the Bishops Against Gun Violence procession, that take place concurrent with General Convention.

Please make time before General Convention begins to familiarize yourself not only with what will take place during convention but also with the online resources, especially those offered on the General Convention website. This advance work will serve you well should you decide to follow specific resolutions as they pass from committee to hearing to one house and then the other.

Become familiar with the legislative process: As you are planning how to cover General Convention, it is important to recognize that many people are unfamiliar

with the way decisions are made in our church. The Episcopal Church practices a form of governance similar to that of the US government: it is a bicameral system consisting of the House of Deputies and the House of Bishops. Here are two easy to understand resources to get you up to speed:

- [Learn about the 78th General Convention of The Episcopal Church](#) graphic booklet
- [An Introduction to the 78th General Convention](#)

Working with secular reporters, I quickly learned the value of explaining our decision making process to them: It resulted in more accurate reporting because I had offered information that wasn't obvious to them thus minimizing their 'assuming' a different form of governance, often one related to a different faith tradition.

Identify where to turn for help: Before, during, and after General Convention, there are three places to turn to for help covering this event: Your bishop and diocesan deputation, the media resources offered through the Public Affairs office of The Episcopal Church, and your peers (other Episcopal Communicators). Everyone covering General Convention is encouraged to use **#GC78** on all of their related media, making it easier for others to find.

Your bishop and diocesan deputation (and, if you are a congregational communicator, your diocesan communicator) are the best source for what work of General Convention means to your faith community. Many dioceses have plans in place for the bishop and deputies to share their General Convention experience through blog posts, journal entries, tweets, or live interviews. Please invite them to add the General Convention hash tag #GC78 on everything posted.

If you haven't already, please consider applying for [media credentials](#). Available for both onsite and offsite media, these credentials offer access to all information released by the Public Affairs Office of The Episcopal Church. The [Media Hub](#) will offer live streaming of legislative sessions from both houses, daily worship, press round-ups, photos, on-demand features and more. The Media Hub goes live on June 22; I recommend you visit it early to become familiar with all that it offers.

Other Episcopal communicators – as well as regular Episcopal bloggers – are another source for information, background, and content for reporting on General Convention. A quick Google search for 78th General Convention or #GC78 brings up a comprehensive list of who is already writing about this event.

