

Report to the Annual Parish Meeting, St. John's Episcopal Church, Niantic
St. John's Parish Lay Delegates to the 234th Annual Diocese Convention
of the Episcopal Diocese of Connecticut
Mystic Marriott Convention Center, Groton, CT, October, 2018



(Editor's note) Joan Fairlie and Chester Fairlie, St. John's elected lay delegates, and The Rev'd Joan Phelps, clergy associate, attended both days of this year's Annual Diocesan Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Connecticut. (ECCT) St. John's Rector, The Rev'd Anthony C. Dinoto was participating in a weeklong CREDO Conference conducted by the Church Pension Fund of the Episcopal Church at the Camp and Conference Center of the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia in Richmond, Virginia and was unable to attend.)

The **234th Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Connecticut**, the oldest Episcopal Diocese in the United States, (*aka Episcopal Church in CT*) was convened on Friday, Oct. 26 and Saturday, Oct. 27 at the Mystic Marriott Convention Center, Groton, CT. Conventions are a combination of conducting the business of the Diocese, worship, education and fellowship among all Clergy who are Canonically Resident in the Episcopal Diocese of Connecticut (*ECCT*) and elected Lay Delegates.

Friday afternoon was devoted to the business of the convention using strict *Robert's Rules of Order*. The full texts of the original and amended resolutions are available on the *ECCT* website. The first item is always the approval of the Diocesan Operating Budget for the coming year and the 2019 clergy salary schedule. Additional resolutions included a decision to launch a "Season of Racial Healing, Justice and Reconciliation" to last at least two years and included other steps to address racism; a Resolution updated the process for electing new bishops; tabled a resolution on "Clergy in Good Standing"; voted to place St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Darien, CT under the direct supervision of Bishop Ian Douglas, Connecticut's Bishop Diocesan; by resolution, recognized and affirmed the inherent dignity and worth of transgender and gender-non-conforming persons.

Saturday's agenda began with Bishop Douglas' Annual Address to Convention. His address included a traditional teaching and a review of what we've been up to as parishes, worshiping communities, regions, and as a diocese. He reminded us of changes taking place in our society and culture, mirrored in our churches, and reminded us that "strategic planning" is being replaced with "spiritual practices." He ended with an invitation to individuals and parishes to recommit to following Jesus in a new way.

The convention's celebration of Holy Eucharist followed. Bishop Laura J. Ahrens, suffragan, preached on the challenges we face as individuals and parishes; the power of community and collaboration; and her hopes for all of us moving ahead not with anxiety, but with deep joy and hopefulness.

Full texts and videos of the Bishop Diocesan's address to Convention and the Bishop Suffragan's sermon at the Convention Holy Eucharist can be found on the Diocesan website: <https://www.episcopalct.org/annualconvention2018/bishop-s-address/>

During breaks delegates were able to visit a number of Vendor/Exhibitor booths. Information was available about Camp Washington, the Diocesan Camp and Conference Center in northwest CT and an exhibit highlighting a representative selection of ministry and mission activities at parishes around the Diocese, including prison ministry. Several credentialed commercial vendors exhibited their products throughout convention including purveyors of: clergy supplies and clothing, Eucharistic vestments, chalices, books, jewelry, rosaries, icons and other religious, ministry and church related items, products and publications.

On Saturday afternoon a less-formal process was put in place to examine 4 questions put before the convention, setting aside the constraints of *Robert's Rules*. Convention Delegates, Clergy and Lay, selected a topic to explore in more detail. Each working group put forth a recommendation for the convention to consider.

Q1: How do we meaningfully engage ECCT in the existing work of serving God's mission among the poor & marginalized?

Action: Voted to fund a Community Needs Assessment to understand the needs of underrepresented groups in the church and beyond.

Q2: How can ECCT raise awareness of the sin of racism in our Church and promote healing toward true racial reconciliation?

Action: Voted to fund a 10-hour/week diocesan staff position to facilitate gathering, curating, and disseminating resources related to conversation on racism.

Q3: In these changing times and consequent needs of our worshiping communities, what are our expectations of priesthood leadership currently defined in ECCT as missional, provisional, conditional, or part-time?

Action: Directed the Mission Council to establish a task force to look at models and possibilities of missionary ministry in parishes.

Q4: How would the practice of "Open Communion" * change the life of the church?_

Action: Directed the bishops to appoint a task force to study "open communion."

Thank you for allowing us to serve as your diocesan convention lay delegates.

Respectfully Submitted,



Joan Fairlie and Chester Fairlie

St. John's Lay Delegates to the 234th Annual Diocesan Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Connecticut (ECCT)

(Some information above was taken from the work of Karin Hamilton, Canon for Mission Communication and Media as posted on the Diocesan (ECCT) website)

- **(Editor's Note:** "Open Communion" refers to the non-canonical, unorthodox and, to some, controversial practice of permitting the administration of the Sacrament of Holy Communion
- to persons who are **NOT BAPTIZED**. Presently, **The Constitutions and Canons of the Episcopal Church** prohibit this unorthodox practice, as does Connecticut's Diocesan policy, without prior consultation with the Ordinary in cases of sanctioned liturgical trials.)