

## GENERAL CONVENTION DEPUTIES

To understand the role of the deputy in the General Convention, it is helpful to look back at the history of how the role and its title evolved. The House of Clerical and Lay Deputies was adopted to distinguish a body separate from the existing House of Bishops. The present name “House of Deputies” began its formal use in 1886.

The early Diocesan conventions adopted existing legislative models. Representatives to church councils were deputized to act fully and freely on behalf of what they thought to be the best interests of the church while they deliberated in the confines of the council.

The President of the House of Deputies at the 73<sup>rd</sup> General Convention stated “The House of Deputies was a complete innovation when the church was organized following the American Revolution. Laity, clergy and bishops have an equal voice in determining policy, establishing our legal framework and maintaining a living liturgical life.”

Deputies are elected to General Convention by their own diocese. As deputies, they are to know their diocese, and the people of the diocese should know them. They are not elected simply to represent the views of their diocese or any particular constituency. Deputies are extraordinary representatives who “ideally...should reflect the will of the whole Church, act for the whole Church and speak to the whole Church.”

Deputies are to be trusted by their diocese and by deputies from other dioceses to be informed and to prepare themselves through study and prayer prior to General Convention. While at General Convention, they are charged to listen to other deputies, bishops and guests; to share their own thoughts and ideas; and to attend and vote at all legislative session. They are trusted to cast votes informed by prayer, factual information, and the workings of the Holy Spirit. They have the responsibility to report back to their diocese after General Convention, and to the best of their abilities, convey how they voted in light of what they experienced and what they learned.

Most importantly, their primary responsibility as deputies is to watch for, to expect, to pray for, and to be open to the Holy Spirit. God guides and governs church affairs. To this end, the Holy Spirit dwells in the church and presides in its councils. What council seeks to understand, by its debates and votes, is not the mind of the majority of its church members, but the mind of the Spirit.

The next General Convention is to be held from the 4<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> of July, 2012 in Indianapolis, Indiana.