

Report on the 234th Session of the Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts

Saturday, November 2, 2019 at 8:30 a.m.

Back Bay Events Center, Boston

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By the All Saints' Delegates: The Rev. Bill Bradbury, Chris Mills, Lynne McSheehy

We arrived early in the morning and used cell phones to find each other in the big hall. The Bishop's Address followed opening Prayers and Reflections led by the Chaplains from Bethany House of Prayer. The Chaplains led two other Reflections in the course of the afternoon, and they were a source of calm and focus. Bishop Gates has a wonderful way with words! He had written his address to match the priorities of the day, so we were provided with a wise, heartwarming, and apropos message. Bishop Gayle Harris, in her role as Chairman, was a busy woman, making sure that the meeting moved along at just the right pace.

Voting machines were set up in the lobby for delegates to elect members of various Diocesan-wide offices and positions. The Diocese is blessed to have so many committed and capable volunteers to work on so many levels.

The diocese sets its plans and priorities, and therefore its budget, according to a Mission Strategy. 'Mission Strategy' means just what it says. The Diocese accomplishes its work by setting goals and working hard to accomplish them through clear plans. Reports on the outcomes of such plans were presented by, for example, task forces with mandates to help parishes be more welcoming to young adults, and more effective in meeting the needs of youth. (We never cease to be amazed at the caliber of young people who give so much of their time and energy to the diocese!)

At breaks during the day, we had the chance to see some of our favorite people. For example, our very own Valerie Cowart and the Rev. Christen Mills were there, and Tom Barrington too. The Rt. Rev. Barbara Harris and The Rt. Rev. Bud Cederholm, always favorites, were in attendance as well. The atmosphere at Diocesan Convention is like a big family reunion. But it's so much more than just a party. Really good work gets done by the assembled Episcopalians!

After lunch the Eucharist took place at Emmanuel Church, and then we reconvened at the Back Bay Events Center. It was a great day for the walk between the two venues, but a shuttle was provided for those who couldn't walk that distance.

At both morning and afternoon sessions, presentations were made; motions were moved; discussions followed; and votes were cast. Many contributors and commenters stood to express deeply-held convictions. With the hope that all comments were made with prayerful consideration, votes were counted. By the end of the day, in addition to voting to accept a \$9,087,795 diocesan budget for 2020, these resolutions had carried:

1. Setting clergy compensation standards, incorporating a 3% increases overall
2. Accepting the recommendations of the "20s and 30s Task Force" for parishes in the diocese to do better helping young adults become integrated into the life of the church
3. Calling for the diocese and its parishes to agitate for the elimination of Life Without Parole sentencing in Massachusetts, and for the right of all incarcerated persons to a parole review after 25 years of imprisonment

4. Calling for parishes in the diocese to take specific, well-defined steps to address creation care and the climate change emergency
5. Asserting beliefs and practices to make the diocese a “safe haven” for all, including non-violent disobedience and harboring on parish grounds those fleeing ICE
6. Extolling the ideas and sentiments expressed in Bishop Allen’s morning address

Here is a link to pictures of the 234th Diocesan Convention: <https://www.diomass.org/news/diocesan-news/photos-diocesan-convention-2019>