

Summary of the 227th Annual Convention

More than 390 lay and clerical delegates from across the Diocese gathered online for the 227th Annual Convention of the Diocese of Virginia.

In her pastoral address, the Rt. Rev. Susan Goff illuminated our experience of the last year saying, “We recognize how we have been broken open by the power of the Holy Spirit that moves in us.” There is “hope in this brokenness...We are no longer the Church we were before the pandemic. The Church has been changed. Each worship community is changed. We can’t go back to the way things were before, because we’re already different. Even if we could, we shouldn’t go back to when we were comfortable, because God is always calling us to go deeper and wider, to go beyond our comfort zones and into the world that is so in need of God’s love.”

Bishop Goff described some of the ways in which the churches of the Diocese have gone deeper, wider and even made their ministries stronger in the past year. She noted that, through their virtual worship, some congregations are reaching more people. Two new worship spaces were consecrated this year, the first new consecrations since 2004. In December, the Bishops will have ordained 26 priests and seven deacons since the pandemic began. The Diocese also called our first Missioner for Racial Justice and Healing, the Rev. Dr. J. Lee Hill, Jr.

Bishop Goff reminded us that God is powerfully at work, breaking down old ways and breaking us open. “Who will separate us from the love of Christ?” she quoted from St. Paul’s letter to the Romans. “Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.”

The centerpiece of the 227th Convention is Resolution R-10a, which commits the Diocese to create a \$10,000,000 fund for reparations to benefit Black, Indigenous, and peoples of color communities.

The resolution cites that “the Episcopal Church and the Diocese of Virginia have a long history of support for and complicity with chattel slavery, violence against Indigenous peoples and land, segregation and other racist systems.” It further acknowledges that the Diocese “is home to numerous church buildings constructed by enslaved people, and many parishes within the Diocese of Virginia are grappling with their history of support for slavery and white supremacy, and their ongoing complicity in racial injustice.”

R-10a directs the Bishop to create a Reparations Task Force “to identify and propose means by which repair may begin for those areas of our structures, patterns, and common life by which Black, Indigenous, People of Colorstill carry the burden of injustices, exclusions, and biases born out of white supremacy and the legacy of slavery.”

The objective of these reparation grants and loans is to provide direct benefits to BIPOC communities, people, and institutions, with preference for any which may have been specifically harmed by past unjust actions by the Diocese of Virginia, its institutions, or churches.

Other Resolutions Adopted

R1 establishes a Virginia Plan for Covenantal Giving through which all congregations will, by the year 2025, pledge 10% of their plate offerings, pledge payments and regular support to the shared ministries of the Diocese.

R2, R3 and R5 establish best practices for digital and hybrid meetings of congregational and diocesan governing bodies including vestries.

R4a establishes an Impact Fund for Racial Justice and Healing. This investment fund will be used to prioritize opportunities within the Diocese to support racial justice and healing.

R6 calls on the Diocese, in acknowledgement of a Climate Emergency, to commit to achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2045.

R8 requires parishes to provide deacons with access to benefits with Church Pension Group.

R9a requests the appointment of an information gathering and discernment team to explore pathways for discernment and formation in Spanish for LatinX/Hispanic communities of the Diocese.

Additional resolutions include:

R-11: Creation of Additional Assistant Bishop

R-12: Trial Use of the "Expanded Revised Common Lectionary Daily Readings"

R-13a: Resolution in Support of Shrine Mont Camps

To read the full text of all resolutions, [click here](#).

Amendments to the Constitution and Canons

Convention approved several Amendments to the Constitution and Canons. The full list of amendments and full text of each can be found [here](#).

Elections to Standing Committee

In elections for Standing Committee, delegates voted to elect:

Lay Order

Thomas M. "Tom" Baker, St. James's, Richmond

Tyson Gilpin, Christ Church Millwood

Clergy Order

The Rev. Christine Love Mendoza, Good Shepherd, Burke

The Rev. Kristin P. R. Wickersham, St. Thomas, Richmond

Budget

Convention adopted a budget balanced at \$5,292,300. Including funds identified by the Executive Board that had not been drawn on in the recent past, the income forecast enabled the Working Group on Budget to recommend a budget meeting all submitted budget requests without cuts.

The budget features new and expanded funding of our ministry priorities in 2022. Among other ministries, the budget funds a Root, Thrive, Soar Cohort and participation in the College for Congregational Development, each in support of training lay and clergy leaders in our mission congregations. Additionally, the budget fully funds the requests for our Grants for Episcopal College Ministries.

Two key personnel notes are that we now fully fund the position of Missioner for Racial Justice and Healing in support of this important work and, in anticipation of the election of a bishop diocesan next year, the budget includes compensation for that position. The budget also includes our scholarship and grant programs. The final budget and narrative budget will be posted [here](#) by November 15.

The Search for the 14th Bishop of Virginia

The Rev. Dr. Rosemary Sullivan, Search Committee Chair, provided the latest update on the search process for the 14th Bishop of the Diocese of Virginia. The Committee has completed diocesan-wide listening sessions and a survey. The report from the survey and listening sessions informed the Diocesan Profile, which is scheduled to be posted online by the end of November. The Committee will screen applicants in January and February, then host a four-day retreat in March with a final group of applicants. She asked all members of the Diocese to continue to pray for their work.

The Convention business proceedings were punctuated by moments of celebration, worship, and stories of the Diocese. To see all the highlights, you can watch the [recorded Convention](#), which is available in both English and Spanish.