

76th General Convention

of The Episcopal Church • July 8 - 17, 2009 • Anaheim, California

Bonds of affection

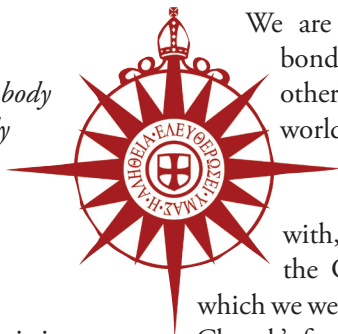
The Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion

Fourth in a series

We who are many are one body in Christ, and individually we are members of one another.

—Romans 12:5

By C.K. Robertson



We are also connected through bonds of love and respect to other churches throughout the world in what is known as the Anglican Communion.

We enjoy both continuity with, and independence from, the Church of England from

which we were born. At the time of our Church's founding, William White — onetime chaplain to the Constitutional Convention of our fledgling nation and then architect of our church's Constitution — proclaimed that the government of this church would "contain the constituent principles of the Church of England and yet be independent of foreign jurisdiction or influence." In the centuries since, churches in other parts of what was once the British Empire have, like us, become independent but retained close ties to the Church of England.

In 1867, bishops from these churches came together at the invitation of the Archbishop of Canterbury for the first Lambeth Conference, a gathering that has been repeated roughly every 10 years since then.

As Episcopal Christians, we have long celebrated the fact that we are part of something much bigger than ourselves and our local congregation. From Maine to Hawaii, from Alaska to Florida, The Episcopal Church is found in every part of the United States. More than this, our Church includes dioceses in Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Haiti, Honduras, Micronesia, Puerto Rico, Taiwan, Venezuela, the Virgin Islands, as well as a convocation of churches in Europe. Our Church was initially named The Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, but we have certainly grown beyond that! We are indeed part of a larger whole and members of one another.



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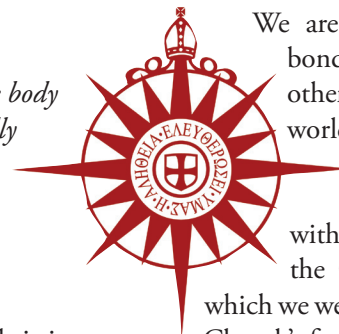
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For more information visit the General Convention website at www.episcopalchurch.org/gc2009.htm

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Unlike our General Convention, which provides the governance of our Church and sets forth its mission priorities, the Lambeth Conference was designed from the start to be something quite different. Archbishop Longley, convener of the first Lambeth Conference was clear in a September 24, 1867 letter that “it has never been contemplated that we should assume the functions of a general synod...and take upon ourselves to enact canons that should be binding” upon the individual Churches, like ours, that together form the Anglican Communion. Archbishop Tait, convener of the second Lambeth Conference wrote on April 16, 1875, that there was “no intention whatever... of defining any matter of doctrine or... interfering with matters of discipline,” which belong to the jurisdiction of the individual Churches like our own. Rather, the living network of Churches which is the Anglican Communion should be engaged, as Archbishop Tait proclaimed, in “a work of love...that we may be able by friendly intercourse to strengthen each other’s hands.”

It is in the spirit of that “work of love” that we have invited to the upcoming 76th General Convention of The Episcopal Church an unprecedented number of Archbishops, Bishops, and other leaders from foreign Churches to

come and observe who we are and how we operate, to learn firsthand about the ways in which our lay and clergy deputies share fully with bishops in the governance of our Church, to worship and pray and fellowship with us. Many of these Anglican leaders are used to very different systems of government, both in their home countries and in their Churches. They will be joined at the Convention by representatives of many of our ecumenical and interfaith partners.

Beyond General Convention, we continue to “strengthen each other’s hands” in many and various ways: through vital relationships with companion dioceses and companion congregations, through global support agencies such as Episcopal Relief & Development, and through personal relationships grounded in mutual care and humility. In all this, we celebrate our life together in Christ, moving forward together in this part of the Body of Christ that is The Episcopal Church, and striving to build stronger mutual appreciation and understanding with other parts of the Anglican Communion.

The Rev. Canon Charles K. Robertson is canon to the Presiding Bishop of The Episcopal Church.



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