

Reports from ECW President Susan Howland as filed from the Triennial Meeting of the Episcopal Church Women during the General Convention in Anaheim in Thursday July 17

Greetings from the Triennial Meeting of the Episcopal Church Women often referred to as the third house of General Convention, along with the House of Bishop's and the House of Deputies.

Marilyn Berthelette, our diocesan ECW treasurer, and I, as ECW President, have the privilege of representing the woman of the diocese of Western Massachusetts as delegates to the 46th Triennial Meeting from July 8th through July 17th. We wanted to write you about some of the highlights of this meeting and tell you how we have been spending our days.

The Convention opened with a Eucharist on Wednesday morning July 8th where Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori reminded us that the heart of this "Body" is Mission, and she likened the sound of the word "Mission" to the "whooshing" sound of a beating heart.

On Wednesday afternoon the Triennial meeting opened with Presiding Bishop Katharine blessing and distributing our Triennial crosses. There are 296 delegates representing 92 dioceses and all 9 provinces at the Triennial Meeting, including representation from Province IX dioceses of Central Ecuador, Litoral, Honduras, the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, and Cuba.

During the week we were visited by many people including the president of the House of Deputies, Bonnie Anderson, Bishops Jenkins of New Orleans, Gray of Mississippi, Bruno of Los Angeles, and the Dean of the Washington National Cathedral to give thanks for the mission of the ECW. On Thursday, July 9th Ms. Hellen Wangusa, of the Anglican UN Observer and the Arch Bishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, brought greetings and thanks. The Arch Bishop said, "Sharing your prayers, care and experience engenders togetherness and is the life blood of the church." He closed by saying, "Thank you for the support of the transformational work you do for the disadvantaged and marginalized."

The stories of mission continued to pour out from the women of the church for the rest of the week.

Some of the social justice and action missions the ECW supported this triennium are: the Jericho Road Housing Initiative, where over \$75,000 has been raised to build a house in New Orleans; the Woman to Woman Program, where grass roots needs are identified by local women and made possible with ECW grant money; a poultry farm in the diocese of Liu Sudan, Sewing machines to the Bethlehem Training Center in Southern Sudan, "Blanketing Navajoland" providing sewing machines, and funding for a Community Arts Collaborative in Haiti. For each Triennial Meeting the National ECW board chooses a local "community connection gift"; Project Dignity of Garden Grove, CA was chosen. This grassroots organization addresses the needs of homeless families and children living in motels. Our combined cash offering was \$1,201, and a jar full of gift cards, hygiene products, children's books and other items were collected. Our diocesan ECW has contributed to all these mission projects, including financial help to bring delegates who could otherwise not afford to attend

The Convention worship space was filled with approximately 7,000 people for the Eucharist on Sunday July 13th. During the service the United Thank Offering was ingathered with representatives from every diocese bringing their triennial offering, which totaled 6.7 million dollars. The Convention Eucharist offering of \$28,168.92 was added to that total for 2009 UTO grants. Our diocese of Western Massachusetts UTO triennial offering was \$49,342.47, and St. John's Episcopal Church, Northampton received a \$12,000 UTO grant to convert an existing lavatory into a handicapped accessible lavatory.

The General Convention closes tomorrow and we will have a final reflection after the closing. Please keep us all in your prayers.

In Christ, Susan Howland

Final ECW Report and Reflections from Susan Howland ECW Triennial Delegate - July 17, 2009

The 46th Triennial Meeting had its final celebration on Thursday afternoon, July 16th, the 76th General Convention closed on July 17th, and the several thousand Episcopalians who formed a small city in Anaheim for nearly two week have gone home.

Deputies and delegates spend much of their day in meetings debating resolutions and voting, but I have heard it said that Episcopalians pray and sing their way through differences, and there was also a tremendous amount of prayer, song, worship, inspirational sermons, and....networking.

In the Spirit of Ubuntu every Eucharist had an Ubuntu choir. The choir was open to all under the direction of Julia Huttar Bailey and Dent Davidson. Each day had different "leaders of song", and I know members of our deputation joined the choir. It is quite amazing to see several thousand people break from the "stuff" of meetings to daily worship God, pray, sing and celebrate the Eucharist together.

The Triennial Meeting had its own musicians, David Stankey and Nancy Beach, who lead us in song each day; and our chaplain, The Rev. Ellen Sloan, wove prayer throughout the business. Elizabeth Von Trapp was the guest performer for the ECW event, and all donations went to benefit the Jericho Road Episcopal Housing Initiative. I joined other ECW members on a "Prayer Walk" through the convention center praying and blessing the principle rooms being used for meetings, and the ECW led Morning Prayer in the prayer chapel each morning.

The Triennial Meeting's key note speakers were Phyllis Tickle, frequently quoted author and founding editor of the Religion Department of Publishers Weekly, and The Rt. Rev. Steven Charleston, assistant bishop of California and provost of Grace Cathedral in San Francisco; both spoke on the topic "Grow in Grace", the theme of the Triennial Meeting. Phyllis said Grace was a tough subject to talk on, and not only for her, but for theologians as well. She likened grace to beauty, and she said neither could be earned.

Bishop Charleston said, "Listen: Grace is NOT "holy luck". He said he has come to know Grace through Mary, the mother of Jesus, "our lady of Grace", and she is a "porthole" to Grace. "Listen: if you want to understand Grace, find Mary; not the icon Mary, but the real honest, genuine human, a woman who was not perfect, but had courage and dignity, from who Jesus learned his values...Grace is Love at work."

One of the moving moments in the Triennial meeting was the Honored Woman ceremony. Marilyn Berthelette, escorted by the Rev. Canon Michael Devine, represented our Honored Woman, Eleanor "Andy" Parke. We will honor Andy personally at a ceremony at Christ Church Cathedral on Sunday, July 26th.

One of the most inspiring moments at Convention was the United Thank Offering dinner address given by The Rt. Rev. Michael Curry, Bishop of the Diocese of North Carolina. He focused on John Chapter 20, where Jesus tells Mary Magdalene, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" Bishop Curry said his message was ONE WORD...GO. "From Genesis to Revelation the message is, the father has sent me and I send you, and he breathed on them." Bishop Curry asked us to continue to spread the good news of Jesus and GO.... continue the UTO and ECW "mission of witness." ...GO and spread His justice...Go UTO.... GO ECW.....GO!

And finally in the closing Eucharist Presiding Bishop Katharine preached on words, the Word, the Word made flesh, and concluding with John 21:15-17 she asked, "how does Word become hope, how does it fill stomachs as well as hearts, how can it strengthen the heartbeat of this Church?" And she gave us a mission: "We're going out there to be that nourishing word. Speak a word of peace and healing to a world desperately in need of it. Become what you eat here today, and feed the world, tend the flock, feed all of God's sheep."

And now Father, send out to do the work you have given us to do.....

In Christ, Susan Howland, ECW Triennial Delegate