

Dear friends,

Summer greetings! Hope you and your loved ones are well and planning for some fun-filled times of refreshment, either at home or away. Please read this entire letter as it contains changes in how we will gather and prepare for our Convention this fall!

Given the helpful feedback from last year's convention, I want to give you a heads up that our annual gathering at this year's Convention, our 86th, will be a little different. It will continue to be a one-day Convention and we want to ensure that it is filled with opportunities to strengthen our bonds of affection in God for each other, for the missions we care about and more. Our theme will be: *Growing together and strengthening our bonds of affection in these challenging times*. In these polarizing times when passions are often alienating us as citizens, we as followers of Christ in the Episcopal branch of the Jesus Movement are called to choose joy, choose friendship, choose hope and choose unity amid our disagreements. These are spiritual and emotional choices we are called to make in Christ Jesus!

At this Convention, we want to do more of some things and less of other things. We want to have more substantive engagements around mission, our capacity to grow more in our spirituality, our joy, our generosity, our care for local and global neighbors, etc., and less time and energy on issues around the budget. Since the budget is of sacramental import in that is an outward and material expression of our inmost values, we will still engage it adequately, only not on the floor of Convention. Therefore, please make sure that you, as delegates to Convention, are well versed on budget issues during our Pre-Convention meetings. We are working with the Deans to have two Preconvention meetings this fall. The reason is to provide two substantive opportunities to understand the Budget as well as to meet the Nominees. We have been engaging the Budget since June and the meetings in the fall will be our opportunity to engage any final questions. We will allocate very little time to discuss the budget at this year's Convention. Instead, we will engage issues around mission, our relationship with one another, our nurture of young leaders, and our stewardship of resources in the Longview. Furthermore, I invite all those who are offering themselves to discern Diocesan leadership to please avail of the Pre-convention meetings to introduce yourselves to the delegates for our prayerful discernment.

This year's Convention will be at Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT). In response to convention feedback and listening to the "whispers" of the diocese, a social gathering is being planned with drinks, entertainment, and meal on the Friday before Convention. This will be a time set aside to intentionally develop and strengthen relationships and not designed in any way to function as a convention event. Diocesan Staff will be present and Canon Johnnie is already at work pulling together a team to create a relaxed and welcoming evening of fun, food, and conversation, including local talent. Those of you who wish, may gather for fellowship at the Doubletree Hilton Hotel in Henrietta, where group rate rooms are available. You can book your room directly with the hotel and RSVP to the reception and dinner buffet through Eventbrite. An invitation will be sent soon.

Let's prepare for Convention and enjoy our common bonds of affection.

Your servant in Christ,

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