



Members One of Another

236th ANNUAL CONVENTION

NOVEMBER 12-13, 2021

Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts

To: Clergy and Lay Leadership of the Diocese
From: Rachel Wildman, Secretary of Convention
Date: June 24, 2021
Re: 2021 Diocesan Convention

You are enthusiastically invited to the 236th Annual Convention of the Diocese of Massachusetts!

Convention 2021 will be an exciting two-day event, taking place on **Friday, November 12 and Saturday, November 13**. Our theme "**Members One of Another**" is taken from Romans 12:5 and invites us to celebrate and explore our interdependence as members of the Body of Christ. Friday's schedule of plenary and small-group offerings is **open to all in the diocese, culminating in a Friday evening keynote address by Dr. Catherine Meeks**, Executive Director of the Absalom Jones Center for Racial Healing. Please read further for more information on how to engage these exciting opportunities, as well as the important annual work of clergy members and lay delegates to Convention 2021.

This is preliminary information. Convention materials, including the schedule, will be sent by early October. Visit www.diomass.org/diocesan-convention-2021 for updates and materials as they become available.

I am a new voting member and/or I am unlikely to make it through this letter today. Is there a highlight video I can start with? Well, actually, yes! Please follow this link (https://bit.ly/diomass_delegates_2021) for our Convention 2021 Orientation Video. Please do save this letter for reference and do read through it fully at some point in the next week or two, though.

Why are we so excited about Convention 2021? Because we are able to offer an expanded Convention program this year including a Friday workshop series! During this series we will hear from key thinkers and actors about aspects critical to continuing to be church in the 21st century, and engage with one another about the wonderings those folks raise in us! Highlights include:

Friday afternoon/evening:

- Plenary Session exploring interdependence as a force for renewal in the church, offered by the Rev. Lydia Kelsey Bucklin, Canon to the Ordinary for Discipleship and Vitality, Diocese of Northern Michigan
- Small group break-out sessions to explore plenary topics further
- Convention Eucharist, the Rt. Rev. Douglas Fisher, Bishop Diocesan of Western Massachusetts preaching
- Keynote Address by Dr. Catherine Meeks, Executive Director of the Absalom Jones Center for Racial Healing with local in-person "eat, pray, reflect" watch parties

Saturday:

- Annual Bishop's Address
- Budget and Resolution Discussions and Votes
- Elections

Will we be in-person or virtual over Zoom? We will be having a "hybrid" Convention this year. All offerings will be accessible virtually, while some will also have the option for accessing them in-person on a regional basis. Convention Friday will offer virtual accessibility for all, and the option of regional in-person engagement for those who wish to take advantage of that. The



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Saturday business portion of Convention will be fully virtual over Zoom. We imagine that for many of you, this will be disappointing. We, too, want to be back in person for the business aspects of Convention. We considered a hybrid format for Saturday where some voting members could be in person and others virtual, but do not currently have the capacity to successfully host a hybrid offering that preserves the integrity of the business procedures. Several factors went into our decision to host Saturday's events virtually; foremost among them were consideration for the safety of everyone participating, and the need to leave enough lead time in the planning process to ensure that Convention 2021 is carefully planned. We don't know what the fall will bring related to the pandemic and a last-minute pivot from in-person to virtual is not possible. Although there is more virtual content than some of us might prefer, Convention 2021 will include numerous opportunities for small group conversation and relationship building. Technology requirements will be e-mailed out in July.

When and how do I register? Registration will open online in August. Please watch for an email from the Convention Office at that time with registration instructions.

What important dates should I mark on my calendar? The work of Convention begins well before November 12th. Mark your calendars with the following dates, and see further along in this email for more information on each.

- Submission Deadline for Convention Materials: 5:00pm on Friday, September 10th, 2021
No late submissions will be accepted after this deadline. This deadline applies to:
 - Nomination papers
 - Applications for admission as a parish or mission of the diocese
 - Reports from diocesan committees or networks
 - Resolution proposals
- Resolution Open Comment Period: September 20th-27th, 2021
- Resolution Discussions on Zoom:
 - Tuesday, September 21st, 7:00pm
 - Wednesday, September 22nd, 7:00pm
- Pre-Convention Delegate Forums on Zoom (attend 1):
 - Monday, October 18th, 7-8:30pm: Central Region
 - Tuesday, October 19th, 7-8:30pm: Northern and Western Region
 - Thursday, October 28th, 7-8:30 pm, Southern Region
 - Friday, October 29th, 2-3:30pm, All Regions

Who can submit a resolution and how? Any certified lay delegate or canonically resident clergyperson can submit a resolution. The resolutions process will be similar to that utilized in 2020 as follows:

- Draft a resolution and submit it to the Resolutions Committee by 5pm on September 10th (submission link will be open in July):
 - **Submitters of resolutions with budgetary implications must contact the Resolutions Committee no later than the submission deadline to be put in contact with appropriate support**
 - Whenever possible, resolutions should include a diversity of signatories from across the diocese
- Evaluate and refine resolutions by participating in the Resolution Open Comment Period:



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- Offer your written feedback to resolutions via our online comment form
- Participate in our Resolution Zoom Discussions (dates above) to learn more about each resolution and provide your feedback

What positions are open this year, and how do I run for election? All those in the diocese are enthusiastically encouraged to participate in our common life by sharing their gifts and talents via elected office. A list of positions to be filled by election at this year's Convention accompanies this memo. Please take a look and see if there is an opening for which your passion and/or gifts are called! Please file your nomination papers as soon as possible, but no later than September 10.

For each nominee, don't forget to send:

- **Required form(s) (attached)**, including 75-word descriptive statement, to be published in the handbook so members of Convention can know something about the nominees
- **A digital headshot photo**, also to be published in the handbook.

Why is it important to certify my lay delegates? Because Convention materials will only be sent to certified delegates currently registered in the Convention Office! Therefore, if there are **any** changes in your lay delegation, please communicate that to Chelsea Smith in the Convention Office as soon as possible. Please notify the Convention Office as soon as possible with changes of address for any lay delegates or clergy. If you have any question about who is certified from your church, please call or email Chelsea (617-482-4826 x406; csmith@diomass.org).

Pre-Convention Delegate Forums: How you will learn about the proposed 2022 Diocesan Budget and other important Convention components! These virtual meetings in the fall offer an important opportunity for learning and discussion about the issues and business to come before the Convention. We recommend that you join the meeting for your region, but welcome you to participate in a different one if that is more convenient for you. Meeting dates are above and Zoom information will be sent out in the fall.

When will I receive the Convention handbook and other Convention materials? We will be sending out Convention materials in October by email. The Convention handbook and budget book will be available online at the time of the mailing. Hard copies of each book will be available upon request. We encourage you to continue using your devices to access the documents online. If you have not done so already, please update your email address with the Convention office so that you receive all pertinent information.

Virtual Display Tables: We are offering partnership options again this year, in place of the traditional display tables. Please contact Chelsea Smith (csmith@diomass.org) for more information if you are interested. Inquiries must be received no later than Friday, September 10, 2021, to be considered.

If you have any questions, please contact Chelsea Smith, Assistant for Governance and Administration, at 617-482-4826 x406 or csmith@diomass.org.

Accompanying documents:

Positions to be filled by election at Convention 2021 (PDF)

Nomination Form (PDF)