



TO: Active Clergy, Wardens and Parish Administrators
FROM: The Rev. Gaelyn Evangreene, Secretary of Convention
RE: Resources for the 102nd Annual Convention of the Diocese

Bishop José and I are grateful for the many ways you serve Jesus in your parish and the wider Church. We appreciate you taking the time to read this letter and follow the provided links in preparation for our Annual Convention in November.

The 102nd Annual Convention, November 8–9, will be held in Cherokee, NC, at Harrah’s Cherokee Convention Center and Resort. We are offering a pre-convention dinner with key members of the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indian on Thursday, November 7. We are also offering workshops on Friday morning as well as an opportunity to learn at the Museum of the Cherokee People in the afternoon. We will gather on Friday evening, November 8, for registration and our Convention Eucharist followed by a buffet dinner. On Saturday, November 9, we will gather for the business sessions of our annual Convention. We are deeply grateful for the clergy and lay leadership of the Western Deanery for helping host our annual convention gatherings later this fall.

We are thrilled to share that our keynote speaker will be renowned Cherokee scholar Mr. Thomas Belt. Mr. Belt retired in 2018 as coordinator of Western Carolina University’s Cherokee Language Program. His work to preserve and revitalize the Cherokee language and traditional culture have had profound significance, not only for the region, but the nation as well. As a teacher and scholar at WCU, he developed vital materials for teaching Cherokee language and prepared multiple cohorts of students to read, speak and teach Cherokee language themselves. Mr. Belt has worked closely with the American Philosophical Society and the Smithsonian Institution to develop and enact protocols for the treatment of Cherokee archival materials, in particular culturally sensitive materials in the Cherokee language. He also served as a consultant to multiple university programs, providing regular addresses and workshops at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Stanford, Yale, Duke and Wake Forest regarding the importance and significance of indigenous languages and the worldview of Cherokee culture.

Tom was raised in a Cherokee-speaking family in Rocky Ford, Oklahoma. He later moved to the Eastern homelands in the early 1990s. He continues to live on the Qualla Boundary of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians where he first worked as a teacher in the Cherokee Central Schools.

We are also excited to share that ***we are continuing our expanded convention this year by offering several optional pre-convention gatherings***. First, you are invited to join esteemed leaders from the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indian for dinner and conversation on Thursday, November 7. This gathering is open to everyone in the diocese, not just lay delegates and clergy. Likewise, you are

invited to participate in workshops on Friday morning to continue our learning with our Cherokee brothers and sisters. Following lunch, there will be an opportunity to tour the Museum of the Cherokee People. We hope these gatherings will be an opportunity for both fellowship and deeper learning. Registration for both Thursday evening dinner and Friday workshops with lunch are on our convention website and will be limited to the first 100 people.

We also want to share that we will host a ***Pre-Convention Virtual Budget Road Tour*** by Zoom on Tuesday, September 24, 6 p.m. and Thursday, September 26, 6 p.m. The bishop and the treasurer of the diocese and other members of the diocesan staff will present the proposed 2025 budget. This will be a time for clergy and lay leaders, especially lay delegates, to offer feedback and suggestions to the funding of our mission in the next year. Two weeks prior to the event, we will share the Zoom link in a separate, diocesan-wide email as well as on the Events page on our website.

New Delegate Orientation meeting will be held virtually on Wednesday, November 6 at 6:30 p.m. New delegates will need to register for this orientation event and we will then email all new delegates the Zoom link. More information is on our website.

Bishop José looks forward to gathering with everyone on Friday, November 8 for our Convention worship service at 6 p.m. in the ballroom of the Convention Center, where the bishop will offer his Convention Address. Convention convenes on Saturday morning promptly at 9 a.m. sharp and we will conclude all business by Saturday afternoon at 4 p.m.

This year, we continue to simplify both the process as well as all platforms used to prepare for Convention, including registration, communication and delivery of any convention materials. This year we will once again be using the ***Whova*** App for communication, voting, and posting documents or other media presentations. Likewise, information and materials will be located on the designated convention page of our diocesan website. One of the essential documents that your parish will need to complete in order to send delegates is the [**Vestry Certificate of Election**](#); **this will be due no later than October 28, 2024.**

On the convention web-page you will find [**the primary registration link**](#) for anyone who attends Convention (clergy, delegates, spouses, non-voting visitors). You will also find all secondary registrations on the diocesan website. Please know there is a fee for each person attending Convention; this fee helps defray the costs associated with hosting this important event. You will also find the link the Harrah's Cherokee Resort that is providing primary lodging for our convention.

Likewise, on the convention web page is information and the form for nominating persons to elected positions. We encourage everyone to prayerfully discern qualified and passionate individuals who are willing to serve and actively participate in the ministry of our diocese.

Again, thank you for your ministries. If you have questions, please feel to contact us at the Diocesan Offices (828-265-6656).

In Christ,

Gaelyn Evangreene

The Rev. Gaelyn Evangreene, Secretary of Convention