



A Fruitful Convention: Plant a Tree for Tomorrow

By Jarrett Kerbel (10/31/25)

At the Convention of our Diocese in Bangor this past weekend, our beloved Bishop began his address with this quotation attributed to Martin Luther:

“When Martin Luther was asked what he would do if he were told that the end of the world was coming tomorrow, he answered, ‘I would plant an apple tree.’”

I take this enigmatic statement to mean: God’s Good News is always more powerful and more hopeful than any bad news that may trouble us. Plant an apple tree in hope because only God gives us a future, and we know that God’s future is life-giving, fruitful, and worth sharing.

The Bishop is calling us to hope and, as a sign of that hope, he wants every parish in the Diocese of Maine to plant trees. Feeling moved by the Spirit, I proposed this idea to the Vestry on Sunday who agreed to move forward with planting some apple trees on our property as signs of hope and generosity. Students walking to John Bapst, neighbors who are housed and unhoused, visitors, and squirrels will be offered a refreshing bit of God’s goodness as they pass by.

I left our Diocesan Convention feeling inspired and grateful. We heard wonderful presentations on youth ministry, summer camp, relations with the indigenous people of Maine, and a very moving testimony about racial reconciliation. We passed a budget for the Diocese and a number of resolutions on administrative issues and social concerns. Overall, I was deeply moved and impressed by the faithfulness of the convention delegates who were truly striving to follow Christ and his compassion through the mission and ministry of the Diocese.

Frankly, how refreshing it was to be in a room where democratic dialogue happened in a respectful and orderly way. Even when parliamentary motions got into the weeds, I shared cheerfully with a colleague, “Hey, this is what democracy looks like in practice.”

We passed a resolution encouraging members and parishes to support the Foster Care system in Maine which has one of the highest case loads per capita in the country. We passed a \$16.00 minimum for lay employees and established compensation guidelines for clergy. We cleaned up our rules for Business Methods in Church affairs. We reaffirmed our commitment to Indigenous ministry, and voted to support Resolution 2, and to oppose Resolution 1 on the November Ballot.

The last two items generated the most discussion in the room. Some delegates wondered whether the church should be taking positions on 'political' matters, and others were concerned that we should not tell our members how to vote. While both resolutions passed, we modified the Preserving Voter Access resolution to be clear that our vote was advisory. Ultimately each member of our churches will vote their conscience and church teachings are just one source of authority in that mix.

I spoke in favor of Resolution 2, "The Extreme Risk Protection Order Referendum" and I was deeply moved by an older gentleman who approached me afterward to tell his story of how he and his family had to struggle to remove a firearm from the home of his depressed and suicidal son. Even though I am a gun owner (target shooting, sporting clays, deer hunting), I support sensible gun safety measures and follow all the rules and best practices myself.

For me this is not a partisan issue and as a church, we should not accept a partisan framework when we discern about moral issues. As a church we know that every human life is sacred and of infinite value, we stand for empathy and physical, emotional and spiritual safety, and we are against violence. We are all about saving lives that are more at risk from mental illness and domestic violence when a gun is present in the home. One delegate spoke movingly about her experience with intimidation with a firearm as a domestic violence survivor.

Many thanks to Dolores Landry, Patricia Sprague, Ralph Whedon and Justin Hall who sacrificed a Saturday to serve as our delegates from St. John's!