

# CREATING NEW WINESKINS

## Preparing for Our Special Convention this November



On Saturday, November 16, 2024, clergy and lay delegates of the Diocese of East Carolina will convene for a special convention, marking a significant shift in how our diocese approaches both its annual budget process and the timing of conventions. This special convention is a pathstone along the way as we transition to holding conventions in November rather than February to better align with the needs of our congregations, their leaders, and the diocese as a whole.

### **A New Budget Process for 2025**

The 2025 budget drafting process, spearheaded by diocesan treasurer Tess Judge, Director of Finance and Administration LaTonya Smith, and the Finance Committee, has been underway since May. This year's process is unique in that the budget will be formulated and approved before congregations submit their pledges. Previously, our budgets were finalized after receiving these pledges, but the new approach relies on past precedents and projections to build that part of the budget.

Key milestones in this process include the submission of ministry and personnel budget. The first draft of the 2025 budget was completed July 31st, and throughout August, that draft budget continues to be refined. In September, the Finance Committee will present its budget recommendations to the Executive Council, which holds the authority to approve the draft. The proposed budget for 2025 will be made available ahead of the pre-convention meetings scheduled for October.

## What to Expect in the Lead Up to the Special Convention

In the time approaching the special convention, clergy and lay delegates will receive the proposed 2025 budget in advance of a pre-convention meeting in October. The pre-convention meeting will primarily focus on reviewing the proposed budget. There will also be an opportunity to engage in conversation with Bishop Skirving and deputies to the 81st General Convention. Bishop Skirving will offer reflections in September, setting the stage for the GC81 discussion. Specific details for pre-convention meeting will be shared soon.

The special convention on November 16th will bring together the 2024 delegates who served at the February convention earlier this year. These delegates will continue in their roles until new ones are elected in December and January, and these continuing delegates will be hearing directly about the details relative to our November 2024 convention in the coming months. Following the special convention and the approval of the 2025 budget, congregations will be asked to submit their pledges for the upcoming year. Delegates elected by their congregations to serve in 2025 will receive information about what to expect for a "year in the life of a delegate" as we embark on this pattern and timing change for our future conventions.





## **Our New Wineskins and Why They Matter: Why This Change & Process Matters**

LaTonya Smith notes that this shift in the timing of convention makes financial sense for the diocese. By having an approved budget in place by January, the diocese can ensure smoother operations throughout the year. Both Smith and Judge agree that the Finance Committee is a great one and that their collaborative work has been strong while navigating this new process and timeline.

Moreover, the decision to move our conventions from February to November addresses the challenges that congregational leaders face during the busy December-January period. During these months, leaders are often overwhelmed with setting budgets, electing new leaders, and preparing for the convention all while celebrating the Advent and Christmas seasons with congregations and family. By shifting the timing to November, we aim to foster greater collaboration and engagement in diocesan life, ministry, and governance, ultimately better supporting both congregational and diocesan leadership.

This change represents a renewal in our patterns, which Bishop Skirving called the creation of “new wineskins” in his address to convention in February of this year. By aligning our convention timing with the needs of our congregations, we ensure that we are effectively supporting the work we believe God is doing in our community.

As we look ahead to the November convention and the new rhythm it introduces, we are reminded of our commitment to adapt and grow in ways that best serve the spiritual, leadership, and administrative needs of our diocese. We are not just shifting the schedule, we are also deepening our collective effort to support God’s work in our midst.