

Points of Communication from the Council of Advice (COA)

Wednesday September 17, 2025

Zoom meeting 14hr – 19hr.

East window of Chapel of St. Mary Tory, Bradford on Avon, UK. Designed by Mark Angus of Bath, installed 1999.



Reminders of Upcoming events and Actions requested:

All those who have received the call to **Convention and the Festival of Gathering (16-18 October)** are requested to Register NOW. COA members and staff who join our Council meetings are also urged to send their travel plans as soon as possible to Pippa. She will then set the time for our late afternoon or evening meeting on Wednesday, Oct. 15.

Now that Audrey Shankles, our Canon for Programming and Communication, has had several months in her post, my listing of upcoming events is unnecessary. Please consult the Convocation website with some frequency, especially the Calendar and Events page where details and links are easily accessed. <https://episcopaleurope.org/calendar/>

Also be sure to sign up for the quarterly Convocation Newsletter and monthly program updates. <https://episcopaleurope.org/newsletter-signup/>

Heads of Ministry, Council of Advice and Convention Staff: We definitely have a site for our scheduled meetings set for December 4-6th. Please be sure to reserve these dates. Details are coming soon.

*****The COA Meeting*****

Following the established agenda format of our meetings as sent by our current President, Lois Stuckenbruck, the following topics were considered.

Diocesan Council Topics

Review of the proposed budget for 2026: Bishop Mark presented a budget proposal that had been reviewed by the Finance Committee. This was distributed to Council members late the night before the meeting. As we have been warned during meetings for the last several months, the declining value of the \$US has had a serious impact on the 2026 expected revenue. Additionally, our governance costs have increased. Ironically, much of

this increase is as a result of the success and greater activity of our Committees and Commissions. There is a desire to provide additional funding for all they propose. We also would like to fund a repeat of the successful expanded HOM gatherings that include wardens and clergy. Another increase in the budget would be to assure the wellness support of our clergy as has been accomplished through clericus retreats.

Unfortunately, this additional funding concurrent with shrinking revenue creates an expected deficit that would have to be funded by our reserves beyond an amount that the Council of Advice was able to accept for presentation to our delegates and clergy at Convention. Nearly all of our meeting focused on explanations of the issues and possible ways to decrease this gap. Discussions concluded with the COA suggesting that the Finance Committee meet again with our President and Vice President to decide how to reduce the budget as proposed and lower the deficit by at least half. The result should be more in line with the expected decrease in revenue caused by the declining \$US.

Grant Requests: There were no grant requests fully prepared for presentation at this time.

Communications and Programming Report

Audrey Shankles reported on the planning progress for our upcoming Convention and Festival of Gathering. There has been much interest in the Festival of Gathering this year. Why? Perhaps because of the theme or perhaps simply because of increased visibility and interest in the Convocation. Audrey didn't mention the excellent and enticing webpage that has been created for our website. Do have a look and pay attention to some of the ways we are requested to prepare. <https://episcopaleurope.org/convention-festival-of-gathering-2025/>

Speakers have been established, and the Creation Care team has been hard at work planning workshops and presentations. Time will be designated for interest group meetings. Those wishing to schedule special interest gatherings are invited to communicate with Audrey so that she can make any additional room arrangements.

A Young Adults pilgrimage is scheduled to enable them to join us for the Festival. In addition to our Opening Eucharist, a Memorial Eucharist is scheduled to honour Right Reverent Jeffery Rowthorn and his wife, Anne Rowthorn. More agenda details are on the Convention webpage as linked above.

Once again, those expected to attend the COA meeting on Wednesday Oct. 15 are requested to send their travel plans to Pippa

Audrey told us of her negotiations with a Travel Management Company, Key Travel, and their proposed one year no-fee contract for travel services. She believes that with the group discounts they offer, we would have the service of a single company making all of our travel bookings at a lower cost. This is despite their small per-trip additional fee. Details will be shared soon. She is hoping to use our travel for the HOM meetings in December as a trial run.

Standing Committee Matters

Liaison matters as needed: There were no oral reports given at this point in the meeting. Audrey Jolivet-Habiby, the head of COMC, however was present at our meeting this month and gave her report earlier. Included in her interesting remarks was the COMC intention to use some of their budget to enable missions to send more participants to the Festival of Gathering. Audrey also informed us of the interest of a church located in Croatia to join the Convocation. Walter Baer visited them in the last month and has begun discussions regarding what would be a long process. It was suggested that they be invited to attend our Convention and Festival, again using COMC funds as already budgeted.

Written Reports: The timing for written Liaison reports was confirmed as February, May, July and November. Exceptionally this year, because we will not meet in November, the next written reports will be requested before the HOM meetings early December.

Nominations / Nominating Committee: Members of the nominating committee updated the COA regarding nominations they knew of and now confirm that most open positions have at least one person standing. At this writing, there remains a need for a lay candidate for the Disciplinary Board and for a Clergy deputy to General Convention. All nominations and the accompanying short biography and head shots must be sent to Richard Cole, convention_secretary@tec-europe.org as soon as possible. The deadline was extended to September 30th but information is needed rapidly to assist Richard in his preparation of the delegate packet.

Council of Advice Matters

Bishop's Report and Matters Arising: Bishop Mark's report centred almost entirely on the budget issues discussed above. Additionally, there were a few confidential concerns related to staffing. Some results of these issues will be shared with the whole Convocation at our Convention.

Dates of Next Meetings:

October 15, before Convention. We hope to schedule the meeting at 17h00 before dinner, depending upon people's arrival times. No meeting in November.

December 4-6 during HOM meetings in Lyon. (Given this late date, the Finance Committee meeting and thus grant decisions may be postponed until January 2026.)

The meeting concluded with members praying the Grace together.