



THE REFORMED EPISCOPAL CHURCH  
OFFICE FOR THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA  
A Founding Member of the Province of the  
ANGLICAN CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA

December 28, 2022  
Feast of The Holy Innocents

Brothers and sisters in Christ,

Christmas greetings to you! I pray that you all had wonderful celebrations and that you and yours are filled with the love of God in sending His Son to dwell amongst us.

It is hard to believe, but General Council 2023 is coming very quickly. To that end, we wanted to update you with the preliminary information that we know now, so you can begin making your individual and parish preparations.

From Wednesday to Friday, June 7-9, 2023, we will gather in historic Charleston, SC for the 57<sup>th</sup> General Council of the Reformed Episcopal Church. This Council will be our first time gathering in-person as a General Council since 2017, and we can't wait to see so many friends that we haven't seen in nearly 5 years.

This Council will also be especially meaningful and significant to us as a denomination. We will be celebrating the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformed Episcopal Church, which officially occurs on December 2, 2023. Praise God for the preservation and faithfulness of the Reformed Episcopal Church for so long!

Arrangements have already been made for us to stay and meet at the historic Francis Marion Hotel in downtown Charleston. We have also made arrangements to have our opening Eucharist service on Wednesday morning, June 7<sup>th</sup> at the Cathedral of St. Luke and St. Paul (ACNA). Archbishop Foley Beach will be with us for this service. On Thursday morning, we will worship at our own St. John's REC, home parish of Bishop Willie Hill, Ordinary of the Diocese of the Southeast.

We will also be honored to have with us the Primus of the Free Church of England, the Most Rev. Dr. John Fenwick. As we celebrate our denomination's anniversary, it is most appropriate that Bishop Sutton invited Bishop Fenwick to provide two teaching sessions on the context and vision of Bishop George David Cummins, the founding bishop of the Reformed Episcopal Church. Bishop Fenwick is a scholar and an author. He's written books on the history of the Free Church of England including the background of the Reformed Episcopal Church in America and Britain. He's also lectured at our seminaries.

Overall, this should be a wonderful time of fellowship, gathering, celebrating, and learning as we conduct the business of this branch of Christ's church. We know that inflation is taking its toll on prices and budgets, but we pray that everyone will still be able to join us for this special council.

Below you will find some details for your initial planning and scheduling. A secondary communication with all the details and links for registration and hotel reservations will be sent in January. Registration is set to open on February 1<sup>st</sup>.

## General Schedule

### *Wednesday – June 7*

After our opening Communion service and organizational business session in the nave of the Cathedral, we will convene back at the hotel for lunch. Wednesday lunch will be a box lunch provided by the hotel such that the Women of the Church can take their lunches to a private room for their gathering and meeting. Others can eat in our designated room at the hotel or take it outside to the wonderful park across the street from the hotel. Following lunch and the Women's gathering, we will resume business sessions during the afternoon at the hotel. Wednesday evening will feature a formal banquet dinner at the hotel with a special presentation and Southeast musical celebration in honor of our 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

### *Thursday – June 8*

Following Morning Prayer at St. John's REC, we will enjoy a buffet lunch at the hotel and then resume with our sessions. We are intending to adjourn earlier than normal on Thursday afternoon to give everyone some free time. You can choose to visit some of the local sites or shops nearby or just fellowship with your brethren. Bishop Willie is working on an opportunity for those interested to visit the newly established museum dedicated to the history of the African American slaves that originally arrived in Charleston harbor.

You will be on your own for dinner on Thursday evening. There are many restaurants in this area of Charleston - OR - you may choose to join us on an optional private harbor dinner cruise. Imagine dining while enjoying the lights of the Charleston skyline, and then strolling the decks of the ship under the stars and fellowshiping with one another. *Note: The cost for the cruise (\$90) will be extra and will be a first-come-first-serve until the limit is reached.*

### *Friday – June 9*

All activities will take place at the hotel on Friday morning. We will have Morning Prayer in the meeting room followed by Bishop Fenwick's final teaching session. We will then conclude all our remaining business at this time. We plan to complete all business and to adjourn the Council no later than 1:00pm, hopefully sooner. We will NOT have a group lunch at the hotel on Friday. This helps keep costs lower (it's quite expensive to have another meal at the hotel) but it will also give you additional opportunity for free time. You can choose to arrange your travel home for late Friday afternoon or you can stay and visit Charleston some more. The choice is yours!

## Hotel Information

We were able to contract a block of 80 rooms at the Francis Marion hotel from Tuesday, June 6<sup>th</sup> arrival through Friday, June 9<sup>th</sup> departure. Thirty rooms have also been blocked for Friday night for those who wish to stay until Saturday. Once the block is filled, the hotel will consider opening more rooms to us if there is still availability. However, there will be no guarantee. In every case we will try to help accommodate your stay at the Francis Marion, but once availability is gone, you will have to arrange your stay somewhere else. **You will want to book your rooms as soon as possible when we open registration.**

*We only block the anticipated number of rooms based on previous councils because we are financially responsible for any rooms in the block that we don't use. Thus, if we block too many rooms initially and they aren't booked, then we would incur thousands of dollars in additional expense.*

The hotel rooms will cost \$169 per night plus taxes for a traditional room which features either one queen bed or two double beds. A deluxe king room or deluxe two double-bed room (each room is about 100 sq. ft. bigger than a traditional room) are available for \$209 per night. We want to be forthright in letting you know that while the hotel has been renovated and every room has in-room vanity areas for the ladies, the bathrooms in each room are quite small. The hotel had to work within the constraints of the historic design of the structure. This being said, the

location of the hotel, the other renovated parts of the hotel, and the discounted rates more than makes up for the small bathrooms. A quick search of the same hotel or other local hotels in downtown Charleston for the same dates as General Council are currently charging \$350 per room, with some as high as \$500 or more.

Additionally, the room rate is extended by courtesy of the hotel from Sunday check-in (June 4) through Saturday check-out (June 10), subject to availability. This may help if you plan on scheduling an extra day or two before General Council to enjoy Charleston. These extended days are not guaranteed. They are first-come first-serve and subject to the availability of the hotel at the time of your booking. Again – book early!

For local residents, or those who choose to rent a car, there is a parking garage onsite at the hotel. The current cost is \$20 per day for parking (\$32 for valet), billable to your room. Local residents driving in for the meetings or the banquet dinner can pay for parking in the garage at the city's hourly rate (current rate is \$2/hr). The airport is about 15 miles from the hotel. Unless you plan on driving to other areas, it would probably be cheaper for most airport travelers to take a taxi or Uber to/from the hotel and airport rather than paying the rental for a car plus paying the parking fee at the hotel. Those arrangements must be made by you, as we will not coordinate shuttles to/from the airport (Note: the hotel does not have a shuttle).

### **Registration and Meal Costs**

The cost of General Council registration and meals will be approximately \$475 per person. This will include the registration costs to cover our own expenses, as well as all the hotel fees and service charges associated with our meals and event. This cost also includes our group meals together. Each morning (Wed – Fri) a private breakfast buffet will be available to our group, as well as the lunches on Wednesday & Thursday, and the banquet dinner on Wednesday evening.

*Note: We are working to see if we can be approved for tax-exempt status on the meals in South Carolina. If approved, we will be able to reduce this cost by about \$30. In addition, if you do not need/want the breakfast package, you will be able to opt out of breakfast and reduce the cost by \$100. This may be helpful for local residents who are not staying at the hotel.*

There will be opportunity for local residents who wish to purchase just the Wednesday lunch and Women's gathering and/or the Wednesday dinner banquet without attending and paying for the other meals or events of the Council.

### **Optional Cruise Dinner**

Thursday evening will feature an optional private harbor cruise on the Charleston Princess. This will include the private charter for three hours, dinner, and dessert. The cost will be \$90 per person (half off for children aged 12 and under). A cash bar will be available for those who desire.

The cruise will be first-come-first-serve on the tickets – although we anticipate that all those interested can be accommodated.

### **Parish Preparations & Your Next Steps**

#### *Elect Representatives*

As many of you enter the months of your annual parish meetings (usually Jan/Feb), please be sure to elect your parish representatives for General Council. Regardless of whether any attend General Council or not, each eligible parish will be asked to complete a statistical form and to certify the names of the individual(s) elected to represent the parish. Your parish should elect one LAY representative (not clergy) for each 100 active communicant members listed on the parish rolls (*or portion thereof*). Example: 67 communicant members means 1 lay

representative. 120 communicant members means 2 representatives. 200 communicant members means 3 representatives, etc.)

*Plan your parish budget*

Thankfully, our contract has enabled us to have a lower hotel rate and to secure 2022 meal pricing rather than the expected increases of next year. However, the cost of General Council will be higher than normal. Likewise, the cost of airplane tickets and other expenses continue to rise. As your parish plans its 2023 budget, you should make sure that there is adequate expense planned to send representatives. Hopefully, the savings your parish experienced by having a Zoom General Council in 2021 were set aside, as Bishop Sutton suggested previously, to help cover the expenses of General Council 2023.

*Look for the next communication*

The next communication from the planning committee will be distributed towards the end of January. That communication will have all the information you will need for booking your hotel room, registering and paying online, and certifying your parish statistics and representatives. Registration and hotel is scheduled to go live on February 1<sup>st</sup>. We will also have all General Council information posted, with links, on the denomination's website ([www.rechurch.org](http://www.rechurch.org)) by the same time.

If you have any questions concerning General Council or the information provided in this communication, please feel free to send me an email at [J2Grote@rechurch.org](mailto:J2Grote@rechurch.org)

Blessings,

The Very Rev. Canon Jason R. Grote  
Program Committee

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