Encountering Love, Embodying Hope - The 116th Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Olympia - Oct. 23-24, 2026

This draft report reflects information received by September 12th.

With a 150-word limit, each candidate was asked to provide a brief biographical statement, highlighting the skills, talents, and abilities they feel would make them an asset to the deputation. Candidates were also asked to answer two follow-up questions pertaining to their approach as a deputy and what changes they would pursue for the wider Episcopal Church.

NOMINEES AT-A-GLANCE

Lay Alternates (pg. 2-6)

Colton Carothers
Saint Mark's Cathedral, Seattle

Elena Loomis
Trinity, Seattle

Kay Rawlings
Faith, Poulsbo

Melanie Audette
Ascension, Seattle

Michael Seewer
St. Paul's, Seattle

The General Convention, among the world's largest legislative bodies, consists of two houses: Bishops and Deputies (lay and clergy). Committees play a crucial role in shaping legislation, making their assignments valuable. Our diocese has benefited from such roles. While deputies vote independently, caucusing and discussions – both during and before the convention – aid informed decision-making.

for the position of

LAY ALTERNATE - GENERAL CONVENTION

Colton Carothers - *Saint Mark's Cathedral, Seattle*

Who Will Nominate You?
The Rev. Canon Rich Wyles

Who Will Second?
Michael Perera

Brief Biographical Statement

I'm a member of Saint Mark's Cathedral in Seattle, where the rhythm of worship, community life, and the cathedral's artistic and liturgical depth have shaped my faith. I'm involved in several ministries that give me life in the Church, including as the lay leader of Queer in Christ and an active participant in EfM, parish discernment, and altar ministries. God has given me gifts that translate well into this ministry: a steady pastoral presence, strong listening skills, the ability to hold complexity with clarity, and a deep love for teaching and helping people make meaning, particularly among the marginalized. I'm also drawn to ministries that invite imagination, storytelling, and spiritual formation, and will be training and participating in Children's Chapel and Godly Play this upcoming program year. My professional background as an attorney has also formed me in collaboration, communication, and navigating systems with care and integrity, all of which would help me in this role.

What is your vision for The Episcopal Church and how would you support that vision?

My vision for The Episcopal Church is a community rooted in sacramental life, generous hospitality, and thoughtful engagement with the world. I hope to see a church that forms people in deep prayer, welcomes all communities, including LGBTQ+ individuals without hesitation, and nurtures curiosity and theological imagination. I want us to be a place where newcomers feel immediately at home and long-time members feel continually invited into growth as I have been since Day 1 at Saint Mark's. I actively support this vision through ministries that emphasize listening, teaching, and helping people make meaning. I also participate in Church-wide initiatives to further this vision, including, most recently, the 50th anniversary festivities of full inclusion of LGBTQ+ members, which took place in Minneapolis this September. My hope is always to help people feel seen and welcome in the beauty of the Episcopal tradition.

What changes do you want to see in the broader Episcopal Church, if any, and how will you work to accomplish that?

I would like to see the Episcopal Church strengthen its commitment to formation and clarity of identity. We can do this through deeper support for lay formation and spaces where people from all walks of life can ask honest questions about their place in the Church. In particular, we need to take evangelizing and the Great Commission more seriously, and I'd like to act within a church that gives us better tools and training to speak about our faith with confidence and authenticity, while inviting and welcoming the broader community through our doors at every possible turn. As noted above, I work toward these goals by supporting ministries that center listening, teaching, and hospitality, and by participating in diocesan and Church-wide initiatives that encourage inclusion and thoughtful engagement. My aim is to help build a church where people feel grounded, challenged, and genuinely at home, whether cradle Episcopalians or converts like me.

for the position of

LAY ALTERNATE - GENERAL CONVENTION

Elena Loomis - *Trinity, Seattle*

Brief Biographical Statement

I am a young adult coming to this Diocese from DioMass, currently studying to become a middle school math teacher. I'm at Trinity Episcopal Parish Church, where I've just joined the choir. In 2024-2025 I had a fellowship at the Episcopal Chaplaincy at Harvard, and am now serving as their remote Board Treasurer. I was very active in DioMass both at the Chaplaincy and as a Discussion Group Planning Committee Member at Grace Episcopal Church Newton. I am comfortable in leadership roles, and I'm a good collaborator and communicator. I'm creative, curious, and have significant experience working with people in different settings and from different backgrounds. I'm passionate about the welfare of The Episcopal Church, and will work to make it stronger.

Who Will Nominate You?
The Rev. Sabeth Fitzgibbons

Who Will Second?
The Rev. Alison Leary

What is your vision for The Episcopal Church and how would you support that vision?

I believe that The Episcopal Church first and foremost must take care of the land we are on and make sure the people living in it feel safe. This means continuing with Creation Care, partnering with Indigenous peoples to share stewardship. This also means continuing with Migration Ministries and Racial Reconciliation, recognizing that our country is becoming ever-more divisive and dangerous for POC, and that The Episcopal Church has a legacy of colonization that we need to reckon with. I also think the Youth and Young Adult Ministries are crucial right now, as the broader church tends to get older. We need third spaces and communities for young people to thrive within. My experience at The Episcopal Chaplaincy at Harvard prepared me for Indigenous partnership, and my current work as a Masters in Teaching student at UW prepares me both for awareness of racial bias and working with youth.

What changes do you want to see in the broader Episcopal Church, if any, and how will you work to accomplish that?

The broader Episcopal Church needs to work to be more accessible. First of all is physical accessibility—as someone who uses a wheelchair most of the time, many churches are hard to get around in and don't have space in pews or choir lofts for a wheelchair, and often have steps up to the altar. The other important aspect of this is accessibility in terms of newcomers to the denomination. Having experienced it myself as a teenager and when taking agnostic friends to church with me, it's intimidating! Even when bulletins have everything in them so there's no flipping through the BCP and Hymnal, the pew aerobics are often not outlined, and there isn't consistency between churches in terms of how much prompting presiders give. As both a teacher candidate and someone with experience working with disabled people, I can identify these issues and formulate plans to resolve them.

for the position of

LAY ALTERNATE - GENERAL CONVENTION

Kay Rawlings - *Faith, Poulsbo*

Who Will Nominate You?
The Rev. James Wyatt

Who Will Second?
The Rev. Elizabeth Riley

Brief Biographical Statement

I am a member of Faith Episcopal Church in Poulsbo and am currently serving as Senior Warden. I have previously been a member of St. John the Baptist in West Seattle and at St. Mary's in Anchorage, Alaska.

I'm a retired paralegal and have years of experiences doing research and working with legal documents. I'm computer literate and currently manage my church's email system and web site. I'm also on the finance committee and am familiar with church budgets and financial requirements. I'm also helping my church launch a church database and accounting system, ACTS Realm.

I have been an Eucharistic Minister and Eucharistic Visitor since 2008. I have been a volunteer in various church committees and involved in outreach. I have attend the College for Congregational Development.

What is your vision for The Episcopal Church and how would you support that vision?

My vision is that the Episcopal Church continue with the true teachings of Jesus Christ and to be a shining example of loving our neighbors, feeding those in need, and pursuing peace. I will support the Church in having a clear vision and voice in this troubled world.

I also want the church to embrace new ideas and callings to ministry. I believe in taking Christ's love out of our church walls and into the community. I think the Episcopal Church can shine a light on the most vulnerable in our country and world and be a source of wisdom and guidance.

I want the church to embrace new technology and meet people where they are and to find new ways to communicate with people.

What changes do you want to see in the broader Episcopal Church, if any, and how will you work to accomplish that?

There are many good voices in the Church and we need a way to make ourselves more visible and let people know that all are welcome. I want us to be clear in our message of love and compassion. I do believe in working within the broader church structure. I believe that the church needs to be more aggressive in pursuing new technologies that improve communication and visibility. I want to the church to continue to speak out against Christian Nationalism and provide a better vision of what Christianity can be in this world. I'm tired of all the "bad press" that Christians get and will work to make the love of Christ be very visible in our national Church.

for the position of

LAY ALTERNATE - GENERAL CONVENTION

Melanie Audette - *Ascension, Seattle*

Who Will Nominate You?
The Rev. Heather Wenrick

Who Will Second?
Joseph Pa Leese Gomez

Brief Biographical Statement

I bring a career defined by international diplomacy and strategic convening, ranging from the U.S. Foreign Service to leadership in national philanthropy networks. As a 15-year leader at Mission Investors Exchange (MIE), I foster partnerships across family offices and foundations, leading national working groups on climate, health, and racial equity. My ministry is rooted in the life of my parish, where I have served on the Vestry and where I currently serve as a lay preacher, Lay Eucharistic Minister, and Lay Eucharistic Visitor. God has gifted me with the ability to bridge complex institutional strategy with authentic storytelling and relationship-building. After having led communications in a volunteer capacity for the 2024 Bishop transition, I am called to connect our diocesan heart with our potential. I feel a deep call to align my academic and professional experiences with my baptismal covenant to expand the Church's capacity for transformative justice.

What is your vision for The Episcopal Church and how would you support that vision?

I envision an Episcopal Church that further amplifies its courageous public witness, building upon our historic commitments to justice and dignity to meet the challenges of our time with prophetic clarity. My vision is for a Church that elevates its social witness as a central mission, employing creative, multi-channel communication to articulate our faith in ways that resonate far beyond our pews. I am currently putting this into practice through my work at MIE and with the Sacred Waters Vision Council, where we are developing a hub—spanning both digital and physical spaces—to foster connection and action on social and environmental concerns. I would support progress at the national level by advocating for strategies that prioritize this kind of impact-forward ministry, identifying ecumenical partners, particularly where we find shared commitment to the common good with those in other faith traditions, to amplify our collective social impact.

What changes do you want to see in the broader Episcopal Church, if any, and how will you work to accomplish that?

The broader Church ideally leans into its role as a creative storyteller that clearly answers our Trinitarian call, with Jesus and his holy ministry as our guiding force. I will work to foster a culture of broad and varied relationships and communication channels that engage and empower clergy and lay leaders to share their faith-driven advocacy and opportunities for investment. Having just begun the Sacred Waters journey, I understand that meaningful connection requires patience and intentionality. I am committed to a model of governance that ensures the work of General Convention translates into actionable, local impact. I will advocate nationally for resources that support grassroots innovation, helping to scale the lessons learned from local efforts like St. Luke's Ballard so that our witness on issues like economic equity and housing and climate justice continues to resonate within and beyond the borders of the Diocese of Olympia.

for the position of

LAY ALTERNATE - GENERAL CONVENTION

Michael Seewer *-St. Paul's, Seattle*

Brief Biographical Statement

I have served now twice as a deputy to general convention, once in Salt Lake City in 2015, and once in Louisville in 2025. I find the policy of our church, encouraging and interesting, and I would be honored to serve again as an alternate deputy to general convention in Phoenix. I've been a member of the diocese 12 years now, originally coming from the diocese of Kentucky where I became Episcopalian in 2008. I am also currently in discernment for holy orders, and filled with joy at the variety of ways I'm able to serve God and the church.

Who Will Nominate You?
Mark Taylor

Who Will Second?
The Rev. Stephen Crippen

What is your vision for The Episcopal Church and how would you support that vision?

My vision is to be a heart and hands of Jesus in the world, and your prayerfully discern that in community with others in our church.

What changes do you want to see in the broader Episcopal Church, if any, and how will you work to accomplish that?

At this time, I don't really have any changes in mind that I want to see myself, but I do believe that the quality of our church is a positive way of supporting the change that we as abroad our church discern together inspired by the Holy Spirit in prayer with each other.