

THE RELOCATED 205TH ANNUAL CONVENTION

January 19, 2021

To Members of Convention of the Diocese:

Notice is hereby given that the 205th Annual Convention of the Diocese of North Carolina on Saturday, March 6, 2021 has been moved to the **Friday Center for Continuing Education, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill**. This is an abbreviated “drive-in” Convention that will take place in the parking lot of the Friday Center.

As you know, the Constitution and Canons of the Diocese currently prevent a Convention or an Annual Parish Meeting from taking place by videoconference. Although we hope and pray that vaccination will abate the COVID-19 pandemic soon, there is no assurance of achieving full abatement prior to the next round of Annual Parish Meetings or the 206th Annual Convention of the Diocese this fall. The collective leadership of our Convention – the Right Reverend Sam Rodman, Bishop Diocesan; the Right Reverend Anne Hodges-Copple, Bishop Suffragan; Ms. Martha Alexander, Chair of the Convention Committee on Dispatch of Business; Mr. Ed Embree, Chancellor; and myself – believe it is very important not to miss another year of a full Convention and Annual Parish Meetings.

The Commission on Constitution and Canons has prepared a package of resolutions that will permit (but not require) Conventions and Annual Parish Meetings to take place by videoconference. It had been our intent for Convention to take up these resolutions when meeting in Winston-Salem. However, it is now clear that the pandemic will not allow us to meet indoors in March.

Anticipating that this might happen, we have been studying the experience of the Episcopal Diocese of Lexington. They faced a similar problem in their own constitution and canons, and they successfully used a brief drive-in convention to remove the restrictions on use of videoconference technology for future conventions. Let’s follow their example! The Standing Committee of the Diocese has advised Bishop Rodman on this matter and concurs.

Here are the basics of the drive-in Convention.

- There will be no registration for Convention. Rather, **we will send you credentials in advance** at no charge to you. Your credentials will be recorded as you enter the parking lot of the Friday Center, thereby providing a quorum count and a record of attendees. There will be a station in the parking lot where problems with credentials can be resolved.
- Audio from the dais will be **broadcast on FM radio that you can receive in your vehicle**. This is a one-way transmission. Voting will be by means of **your vehicle’s horn**. Not many vehicles will have line of sight to the dais, unfortunately, and there will be no video screens.

- As soon as the Convention is called to order and a quorum is certified, Dispatch will move the adoption of a Special Order of Business to limit the business of Convention to absolute necessities. Among these necessities is the package of resolutions from the Commission on Constitution and Canons.

- The Diocese is very grateful to UNC-CH for making the parking lot available. However, there are importation limitations on use of the parking lot.
 - Members of Convention must **remain inside their vehicles** at all times. The only exceptions are members of the dais, Diocesan staff, the Credentials help desk, and our event technicians and parking lot personnel. No tail-gating, side meetings, or walking around to meet and greet! Law enforcement officers will be present. If members of Convention are seen getting out of their vehicles, UNC-CH may order everyone off their premises immediately. The officers may also issue citations for violating the Governor’s Emergency Orders. Please help us preserve our relationship with UNC-CH by heeding these restrictions.

 - The Friday Center buildings will not be open. **No toilet facilities** will be available in the parking lot. Members of Convention should manage their personal comfort by visiting NCDOT rest stops or off-campus businesses before or after Convention.

 - No refreshments will be available. Bring your own water, etc. EMS will be present.

- Under these limitations, the business of Convention will have to be done quickly. Our target is **30 minutes from convening to adjourning**. Therefore, the Special Order of Business offered for your adoption will not allow late resolutions, committee hearings, debate of resolutions, amendments to or substitutes for resolutions, etc. The Bishop Diocesan will call for yes-or-no votes on each matter put before Convention without delay. To maintain transparency of the Convention process, we will take the following steps prior to Convention:
 - The resolutions and Special Order of Business will be published in February.

 - Prior to Convention, the Commission on Constitution and Canons will hold public webinars on the proposed resolutions so that everyone may read them, pose questions, and offer input.

 - For the same purposes, the Secretary will hold public webinars on the Special Order of Business prior to Convention.

 - Convocations are allowed to meet by means of videoconference, and members of Convention can discuss the resolutions at that time. Deans have been asked to schedule Convocation meetings by Zoom in February.

We are currently working out how to provide Spanish translation of the proceedings in real-time and how to satisfy the canonical mandate that each Convention of this Diocese have a celebration of the Holy Eucharist.

The parking lot of the Friday Center is easily accessible from NC Highway 54, less than two miles from I-40 on the east side of Chapel Hill. We intend to deploy temporary traffic signs on Highway 54. The parking lot has multiple pathways in and out so that hundreds of cars can enter and depart within a short period of time. No parking fees will be assessed. Entering and exiting the parking lot will be very similar to attending a small sporting event.

There is a cellphone tower at the Friday Center, and we expect that cellphone coverage in the parking lot will be good. This is cellphone not WiFi. It is our intent to stream the audio of the Convention on the Internet. If your vehicle does not have an FM radio, you could listen to the Internet stream on your cellphone. Unlike video, audio streams do not consume a large amount of bandwidth in the air.

We respectfully ask that **clergy who do not have the right to vote at Convention stay home**, so that we can minimize traffic at the Friday Center. We look forward to seeing you in November, either in Winston-Salem or on Zoom. Similarly, we ask that alternates not serving as delegates and persons who usually attend Convention as **guests stay home**.

If you live a considerable distance from Chapel Hill, it may seem strange to be asked to drive as many as five hours total for a 30-minute meeting. We recognize this. We do not ask this of you lightly. However, unless we achieve a quorum of 50% in both the lay order and the clergy order, Convention will not be able to take the actions that will prevent this situation from recurring. Please consider your drive time as an offering for the good of the Diocese.

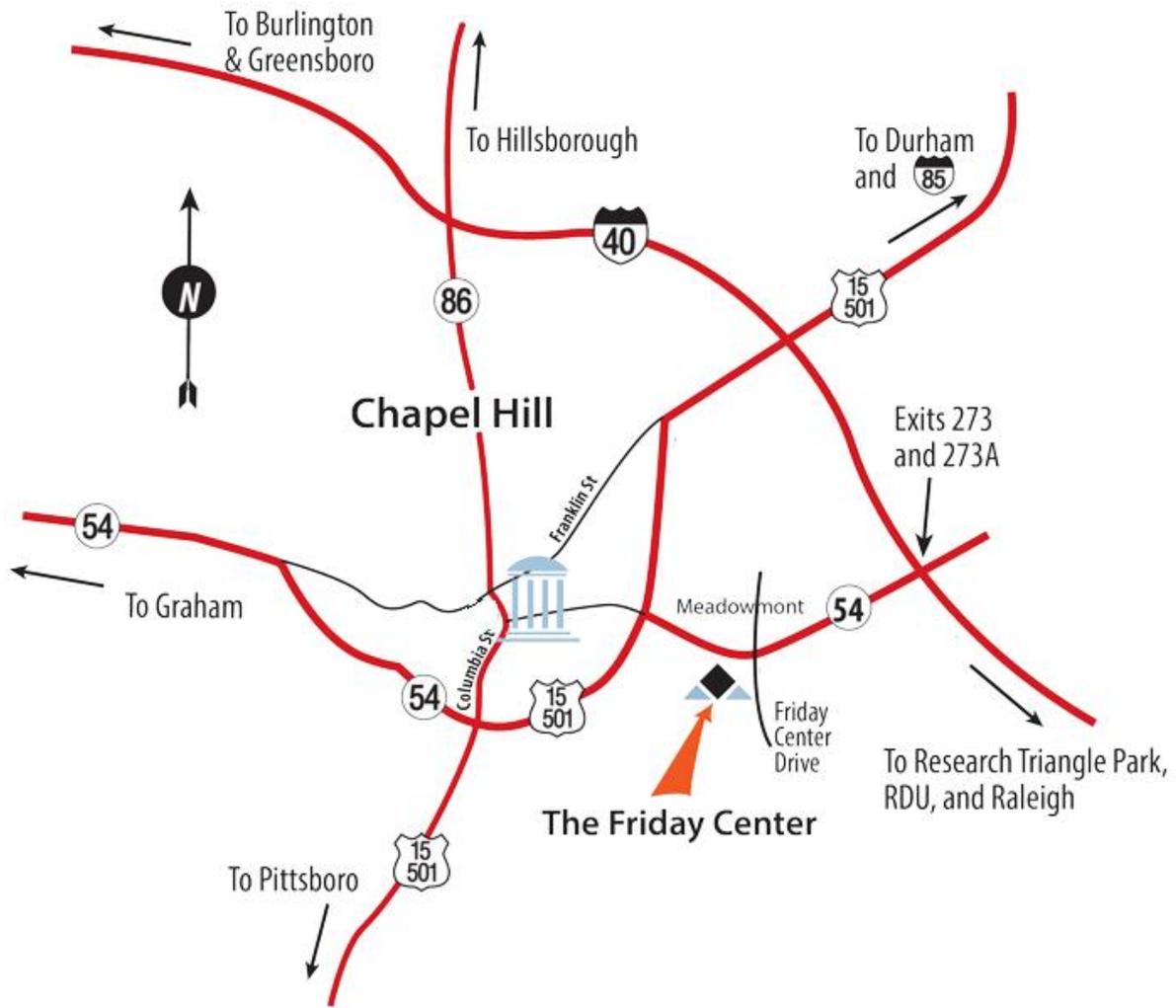
Carpooling is out of the question because of COVID-19, but **attendees from the same household should ride together**. If a voting member of the clergy will attend Convention and his or her spouse is a member of the clergy person's church, the Vestry of the church could elect the clergy person's spouse as a lay delegate for this one Convention. Doing so would help us attain a quorum while reducing gasoline consumption and mitigating traffic at the Friday Center.

We recognize that March can bring bad weather, but scheduling a Convention later in the spring was problematic. The odds for March 6 are in our favor. If a decision must be made to cancel because of bad weather, we will notify the Diocese no later than 6 pm Friday, March 5.

To stay informed about Convention, once again we ask you to subscribe to Please Note by visiting [HTTP://TINYURL.COM/EDNC-PN](http://TINYURL.COM/EDNC-PN). Also, we invite you to join the Diocesan leadership teleconferences each Tuesday at 8:30 am. Go to [HTTP://TINYURL.COM/EDNC-COVID-ZOOM](http://TINYURL.COM/EDNC-COVID-ZOOM).

If you have questions about this notice, please email me or call (919) 834-7474, enter extension 5416, and leave a voicemail. The Chair of the Committee on Dispatch of Business, Ms. Martha Alexander, and I join our Bishops in expressing gratefulness for your service to the Diocese and your understanding and cooperation during these peculiar and stressful circumstances.

Charles L. Till,
Secretary of the Convention
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MAP TO THE FRIDAY CENTER AT UNC-CH