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The Convocation of Episcopal Churches in Europe

Bishop Pierre Whalon Honors Convocation Leaders at the 2010 Convention in Nice, France

From Nice... Some delegates to the 2008 Convocation Convention in Waterloo had the good fortune to be in the same “home group” as **Carole Labrousse**, a recipient of the 2010 Bishop’s award. In Waterloo, Carole had a special role...to tell the story of the Convocation. Carole is the person with the longest association and memory for the modern-day life of the Convocation. Her fascinating story, of course, reminds us that understanding our own history is important to helping us to prepare us for our future “journey in mission.” (the theme of this year’s convention!) At the awards dinner, Bishop Pierre honored Carole for her longtime service and her willingness to lead many projects, including helping to plan the 2010 convention. “She has inspired so many others to engage in the work of the church,” said the Bishop. Fortunately for us in the Convocation (and for Carole), her Convocation story began in 1967 when she first arrived in France with her 6-week old baby and husband. She reported, “I discovered almost immediately that sign so familiar to American Episcopalians – *The Episcopal Church Welcomes You!*” For many years, the Church of the Holy Spirit Church (Nice) served as Carole’s spiritual home in France, but in 1971, it was decided that Holy Spirit should close and merge with Holy Trinity [Anglican] Church (Nice). As Carole points out to us, “It would be inaccurate to describe Holy Spirit as one of the so-called “lost churches” of the Convocation.” Rather, we in the Convocation and at Holy Trinity continue to benefit from the legacy of the sale of the Holy Spirit church building. Forty years later, “The Nice Fund” still exists, making it possible for the Convocation to give small grants that support the mission needs of the parishes and missions of the Convocation and of Holy Trinity. The former Episcopal Church in Nice is now a vibrant center of ministry for the Église Reformée in France.

From Austria... **The Rev. Clair Ullmann**, a 2010 Bishop’s Award recipient, is a woman of great wisdom, following on not only her life’s experiences, but also the attentive and deliberate way in which she has developed the many spiritual gifts from God. Many Convocation members and newcomers have experienced the warmth of the Ullmann’s hospitality at their home and retreat center, nestled under Hochkönig Mountain and surrounded by earthly treasures. There are confirmands’ retreats, women’s retreats, and couples experiencing the MAP program (Marriage – an Adventure in Progress). In this setting, together Rev. Clair and her husband, Rainer, minister to those seeking a quiet place to “rest in God’s presence” and to couples making that “mysterious journey of a lifetime”... marriage. Though Rev. Clair has served on many Convocation Committees, spiritual direction and mentoring remain an important focus of her ministry. This year at Convention, as she stepped down as President of the Council of Advice, Convention delegates gathered to hear her reflections on the work of the Council and the Convocation. It was a mixing of nuts and bolts, grounded in prayer. As she spoke, a vision of her leadership style emerged. Rev. Clair first heard the priestly call while working at the Episcopal Church in Florida. In 1994, she was ordained deacon at the Pro-Cathedral in Brussels, and two years later, she was ordained to the priesthood by Archbishop George Carey at Canterbury Cathedral. In the Convocation, Rev. Clair serves as an assisting priest at Church of the Ascension, Munich Germany and as Vicar of the Chapel of the Holy Family in Mühlbach am Hochkönig, Austria. Rev. Clair completed her studies at Virginia Theological Seminary and The Shalem Institute, and earned a masters diploma from the University of Leuven (Belgium).

From Waterloo... **Felicity Handford**, another recipient of the 2010 Bishop’s Award, has been part of so many efforts critical to the implementation of the modern-day vision of the Convocation. She recalls her first time serving as delegate (1997) to a Convocation Convention. “A strong early memory is the unforgettable and transforming moment when the Convocation’s Canterbury Cross first entered the Cathedral in Paris.” It was the first leg in the Convocation’s pilgrimage of the cross, an event that

continues to hold special significance for the many Convocation leaders who emerged during this era. In 1998, Felicity Handford was to be the first lay-woman and non-American elected President of the Council of Advice. That Council would be the catalyst for the first-ever election of a Convocation bishop-in-charge, our own Bishop Pierre. Felicity also participated in the 1999 Nice Consultation that led to the development of the Convocation's seminal mission plan, Mission 2000. That same year, she, Father Tom Pellaton and Canon Joe Britton produced the Convocation's original child protection policy. In 2004, Bishop Pierre named Felicity chair of the European Institute for Christian Studies. In her Convention speech this year, Felicity shared the story of her first EICS meeting, when she joined Bishop Pierre and two theologians to contemplate the mission of EICS. She said, "I was wondering what the Bishop was thinking when he appointed me – a lay person and a Sunday school teacher -- to chair this group." Typical pew-sitter thinking! In just five short years, her committee -- that group of theologians, some other dynamic pew sitters, and assorted clergy and laity -- pooled their collective talents to engage in a remarkable Spirit-driven process. Several successful-new Convocation programs were conceived as a result: the Ordinand training guidelines, the *Transformed by Stories Christian* formation series, and the *Academy for Parish Leadership*. Felicity also serves in her home parish, All Saints' (Waterloo), where she helps lead the Sunday school program, and has been twice on the vestry. Those pew-sittin' days are clearly over for this Convocation leader.

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