



The
Episcopal Diocese
of New York

A Report given by the Rt. Rev. Mary D. Glasspool
At the 245th Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of New York
Saturday, November 13, 2021

My friends and colleagues: thank you for your presence here – both in this Cathedral and online - as we move toward rolling the credits on this 245th Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of New York. In the 1960s the Diocese of New York held its one day annual convention in Synod Hall, alternating between Saturdays and Tuesdays year to year. One of my early childhood memories has to do with my father, then Rector of St. James, Goshen, and his best friend Sam Holiday, Vicar of St. Paul's, Chester and Grace, Monroe. Sam and my father would get together at our house, the Rectory of St. James, the night before Diocesan Convention to decide whether or not they would go. One of them would always have to talk the other into going. Which one of them it was who needed to be talked into going varied from year to year. Mostly these meetings resembled a small communal lament as the two of them smoked and drank too much and complained into the early morning hours. The miracle of it was that even on little amounts of sleep, they ended up going to Diocesan Convention – in fact, they rarely missed.

One year, on their drive home, Sam said to my father, “Well, Doug, I’m glad you talked me into it!” My father, who had not at all been impressed with the proceedings, said, “Why?” “Well,” said Sam, “It restores my faith in the Holy Spirit.” “What on earth do you mean?” asked my father. “Well,” said Sam, “I get into that awful Synod Hall, and I look around me and see all the people who have come to that ridiculous Convention. And I realize that all of us darn fools can’t be running the Church. So it *must* be God the Holy Spirit! Restores my faith.”

I try to remember that piece of family history when I’m getting ready to go to Diocesan Convention, and to think, too, about the wisdom behind the humor. My hope is that we’re all praying that it is the Holy Spirit who’s at least *guiding* the Church, if not running it – working through us all to do God’s will – but it takes our own commitment, too, and I continue to be inspired by the commitment of so many in our Diocese.

The Rev. Curtis Hart is Chair of the Ecumenical and Interfaith Commission of our Diocese and his faithful leadership of that Commission has helped to produce the resolution this Convention has passed addressing antisemitic and Anti-Jewish issues in our interpretations of the lectionary readings as well as helpful and educational materials accompanying these concerns. In addition, this Commission is exploring, in partnership with EDS at Union, a possible Field Education position for a seminary student in the practical area of interfaith relationships. The Commission monitors and receives reports from the church’s engagement with other Christian Denominations as well as offering educational opportunities and field trips - and each meeting of this group promises an in-depth theological discussion on a wide variety of topics.

The Social Concerns Commission is a large umbrella for the Diocese’s work in Reparations, Anti-racism training, human trafficking, creation care, LGBTQ+ issues, domestic violence, and many other issues of social and economic justice. Up until this past August, the Commission was ably led by **the Rev. Winnie Varghese**, who accepted a call to become Rector of St. Luke’s Episcopal Church in Atlanta. After a small gap in the calling together of the

Commission, and to my great joy and acceptance, **Carla Burns** has agreed to step in to become Interim Chair of the Social Concerns Commission. Thank you, Carla!

The Rev. Yamily Bass-Choate is our Diocesan Liaison for Global Mission, and she provides a variety of different skills in our developing relationships with other Anglican Dioceses around the world. The Global Mission Commission experienced the passing of the baton as **the Rev. Nigel Massey** stepped back from his leadership role and successfully mentored **Patrick Kidd** to take the reins of the Commission. Four short weeks ago today in this very Cathedral, the Global Mission Commission held its 5th annual Global Mission Fair under the theme of *We Are One in Jesus: Recentering Global Mission in God's Reconciliation*. This fair was planned, right from the beginning, as a hybrid event, and the many people who worked on putting it together were thrilled and gratified with the outcomes. **The Rt. Rev. Dickson Chlongani**, Bishop of our Companion Diocese of Central Tanganyika, gave a pre-recorded keynote address, but was available in real time onscreen to answer questions and have a "face-to-face" onscreen conversation with Bishop Dietsche. (I might just comment here that these are not new technologies. Rather, the pandemic has motivated the Episcopal Church to learn to use them and discover how well some of these advances can inform and support God's Mission and our work together.) Sustainable Development Goal Grants - which is a ministry of the entire Diocese - were awarded to Christ Church New Brighton, Staten Island for their work with an Episcopal High School in Liberia; Holyrood Church/Iglesia Santa Cruz for their partnership and work with the Diocese of Puerto Rico in its rebuilding efforts; St. Edmund's Church in the Bronx, for its work with St. Barnabas Church in Okwudor, Nigeria, equipping local farmers and young people to produce food through "Aquaponics"; St. John's Church, Getty Square for their partnership with the Tamilnadu Theological Seminary in a program that addresses health and related issues connected to the pandemic; St. Michael's Church, Manhattan in its partnership with the American Friends of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem for work with mental health at the Children's Clinic at Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza City; and finally, St. Philip's, Garrison and their partnership with St. James Primary and Secondary School in Kitale, Kenya to build two girls' dormitories with the school. These are outreach efforts in which we can all take pride, because the Diocese of New York has committed itself to the Sustainable Development Goals adopted by the entire Episcopal Church.

The Global Women's Fund continues its work under the able leadership of **Judi Counts** and with Chair-Coadjutor **Dianne Roberts**. GWF used much of the pandemic time rebuilding our infrastructure and systems in order to make our support of the education of women and girls in the Anglican Communion more sustainable and effective. We are always grateful for the work of our Diocesan staff support person, **Sharon Luke**.

The work of the Reparations Committee under the incredible leadership of Co-Chairs **Cynthia Copeland** and **the Rev. Richard Witt** continues to help move the entire Diocese forward in the complicated and necessary work of racial justice and reconciliation. Resolutions we have passed at this convention authored by **Diane Pollard** and **Richard+ and Cynthia** indicate the ongoing progress of our work and invite the entire Diocese into that work. The core values of **Truth, Justice, Integrity, and Transformation** signify to us all the *character* in which we hope to live into God's Dream.

Yet another transition in leadership is occurring in our College Chaplaincy Committee. **The Rev. Nils Chittenden** has served for the past five years as Chair of that vibrant group and has asked to pass the baton to a new Chair: **Nicholas Birns**, professor at NYU and parishioner at Grace Church, Manhattan. Nils+ has done a meticulous and spectacular job as Chair, and we will

miss him as he takes a break to discern what's next. We delight in Nick's leadership as well and look forward to our growing engagement with young adults both on campus and off.

Then there's the work of the Convention Planning Teams. I say *teams* plural, because there are so many people involved not only in the events of today, but also in the planning and execution of the five Rollout Meetings this year; the complex issue of voting; the technologies needed to make things accessible while keeping everyone safe; and the creative urges that work through us to find ever more beautiful ways in which to praise and serve our Loving God together. Secretary of Convention **the Rev. Matt Heyd** has worked tirelessly to expand and diversify participation in Convention and has reached out to countless people to ask for input and suggestions, or to make sure they are appropriately informed. Senior Assistant Secretary **Sara Saavedra** maintains structures, records, and edits almost all of the printed materials connected to Convention. The Executive Planning Team of Chancellor **Alice Yurke**, Communications Director **Nick Richardson**, Cathedral Liturgist **Peter Ennis**, Coordinator of Music and Liturgy **Jeannine Otis**, IT guru **Geoff Smith**, Resolutions' Chair **Anne Sawyer**, plus the Liaison to the Bishops **Mary Glasspool**, assist Matt+ and Sara in putting together the broad picture. There is a larger planning committee whose members you may have met on the steps of the Cathedral or at lunch or in small groups who have made their own significant contributions. And of course, the Commission chairs, Commissions, and all of YOU are parts of this Convention. If you look at the leadership and think to yourself *Those darn fools couldn't possibly be running this convention*, then perhaps we have at least restored your faith in the Holy Spirit!

I want to offer a special thanks to all those of you who allowed yourselves to be nominated and were *not* elected to whatever office. The people who were elected will receive thanks on the job – but with all my heart I say to those of you who had the courage to put your names forward and are perhaps disappointed or maybe *relieved* at not being elected– please do not be discouraged. You are an important part of the Diocese of New York and I sincerely hope that you will find a way to continue to offer yourselves and your gifts and skills in the ministries that need you. Thank you for being willing to offer yourselves.

I am and will forever be deeply grateful to my brother bishops: +Andy and +Allen. I have learned so much from each of them, and I know that all three of us will work hard to be a balanced team as we help the Holy Spirit move our Diocese through this next transitional chapter in our life together. Along with our General Convention Deputies, we are preparing for the General Convention in Baltimore in June of 2022, followed by the Lambeth Conference in late July and early August of 2022. I ask your prayers for each of these future gatherings, that the Church may show forth the glory of the God we serve and make a positive difference in this world that God created.

Finally, a word about the theme of this convention: *Your faith has made you whole*. Jesus pronounces this statement to a number of people he healed in the Gospels, yet in the Prayer Book Service of *Ministration to the Sick*, it is the story of the ten lepers whom Jesus encountered in Luke's Gospel that is cited. You know the story. Ten lepers come to Jesus as he is traveling to Jerusalem. They keep to the required protocol of social distancing and ask for mercy. Jesus tells them to go and show themselves to the priests. Like a negative COVID test result, that's what's required if they are to return, physically, to the full community. On their way to the priests, they find they have been made clean. One of them, a Samaritan, returns to thank Jesus – and Jesus says to this one: *Your faith has made you well/whole*. The nine others, who may have gone off to get a second opinion, were still *cured* of their leprosy. But the

grateful Samaritan leper – the one who was a double outcast in society, was the one who, when he stopped to reflect, realized that the cure had come from God – and had been affected through this man Jesus. So he turned back. He praised God. He thanked Jesus. The Samaritan was able to see that God was acting through Jesus, and that's what made him whole. Ten lepers were cured; but only one was completely healed.

As Christians we are called to follow the example of the grateful Samaritan leper. As the Body of Christ in the world, we recognize ourselves as a fellowship of lepers touched by Jesus – and recognizing and consciously celebrating that touch and its source – gather to give thanks and praise for the grace that is as undeserved as it is healing. In such response lies our salvation. *Go in peace; your faith has made you whole.*

Thank you.