



The
Episcopal Diocese
of New York

A Report given by the Rt. Rev. Mary D. Glasspool
At the 246th Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of New York
Saturday, November 12, 2022

My friends and colleagues: thank you for your faithful presence here and online as we move toward finishing our work together at this convention. At a recent visitation, during the delightful potluck that took place following the service, I was very intentionally asked to do a little “Q and A” with the gathered community. I actually love doing this and geared myself up to talk about where I might see the Episcopal Church ten years from now, or what other churches are doing to get people to come back to in-person worship, or what funds are available from the Diocese for fixing the roof. The first question was *What’s your favorite Bible verse?* Caught a tiny bit by surprise, I yet managed to silence my snide evil twin that wanted to say *John 3:16* as quickly as I could get it out of my mouth; or the slightly more nuanced *Micah 6:8*, which I think of as the *John 3:16* of Hebrew Scripture. Instead, I took some time to think about the question, and thinking out loud I found myself saying *You know, I really like that section of Matthew’s Gospel, Chapter 13, in which Jesus is speaking both to the crowds that have gathered and to his disciples – and he’s teaching them about what the kingdom of heaven is like. “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed...the kingdom of heaven is like yeast...the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field...like a merchant in search of fine pearls...like a net cast into the sea...”* It always brings to my mind the image of a popcorn popper with Jesus throwing out different images so that everyone can latch onto at least a piece of what the kingdom of heaven is like.

And this section of Matthew’s Gospel concludes with a metaphor I find instructive: (Jesus said) *Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.* (Matthew 13:52) I wonder if that isn’t a good metaphor for where we are as church. The church, as a corporate whole, is like a scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven, and as the master of a household full of treasure, has to discern what of the new treasure is worth keeping, and what of the old treasure needs to be held on to, while the rest goes back to the sea.

I see this discernment at work in all of the people and commissions I have the honor and privilege to work with. The Social Concerns Commission is a huge umbrella that covers many aspects of diocesan life: Anti-racism training, creation care, human trafficking, LGBTQ+ issues, domestic violence, prison reform, and other issues of social and economic justice. When the Rev. Winnie Varghese left to become rector of St. Luke’s Episcopal Church in Atlanta, **Carla Burns**, to my everlasting gratitude and delight, stepped in to become Interim Chair. During the course of this past year, in addition to raising up new leadership for the Anti-racism committee, which is now chaired by **Lauren Reid**, Carla kept the Social Concerns Commission, whose various parts operate independently, together – and successfully passed the baton to the **Rev. Allison Moore**. Much of the work of this Commission has already been put before you at this convention, and there is much leadership here that we can all be proud of.

As with Social Concerns, the work of the Reparations Commission has been highlighted throughout this convention. Under the able leadership of co-chairs **Cynthia Copeland** and **Richard Witt**, the Reparations Committee, formerly under the umbrella of the Social Concerns Commission, became its own commission. This transition happened to make clear to all of us

that the work of reparations is a lifelong endeavor, and part of the fabric of the life of our diocese.

The Creation Care team, under the committed leadership of the **Rev. Liz Maxwell** and the **Rev. Matt Calkins**, has also had a prominent role in our work here. The resolution for the Diocese to achieve carbon neutrality by the year 2030 is a critical and well-thought-out piece of legislation that is in alignment with the entire Episcopal Church and supported by the World Resources Institute. It is so very important that we each and all do what we can to repair and heal this fragile earth, our island home.

The Rev. Curtis Hart continues in his role as Chair of the Ecumenical and Interreligious Life Commission. An exciting new development in the Commission's work has been partnering with Episcopal Divinity School at Union Theological Seminary to participate in the Field Education Program by offering the Commission and the Commission's work as a placement for a seminary student. That seminary student: **Oxana Orlova**, is now working with the Commission and learning through both study and experience, how to navigate a very pluralistic world. On behalf of the Diocese, the Commission also maintains a close relationship with the New York State Council of Churches, which provides tools for community organizing and faith based legislative action, as well as certifying and supporting Protestant Chaplains for New York State agencies – most notably the prisons. On December 9 of this year, in Albany NY, the New York State Council of Churches will hold its annual Awards and Fund-raising dinner, and two members of our Diocesan Community will be recognized for their work. The **Rev. Dr. Gideon Jebamani**, Chaplain at the Sing Sing and Taconic Correctional Facilities will receive the Award for Excellence in Chaplaincy; and the **Rt. Rev. Mary D. Glasspool** will be honored for Excellence in Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations. If you know how these things work in New York, you know that the award winners are expected to be part of the fund-raising efforts – so if you're not doing anything else on Friday night, December 9, and want to skip up the road to Albany for dinner, please let me know and I'll get you a ticket! The Ecumenical and Interreligious Life Commission continues to follow a resolution that was passed at General Convention in July that has to do with addressing antisemitic and Anti-Jewish issues in our interpretations of the lectionary readings. This is holy work.

Mr. **Patrick Kidd** continues to lead the Global Mission Commission with great skill and faithfulness. This Commission oversees many different working groups, including the Tanzanian Task Force, chaired by the **Rev. Deacon Robin Newman**, which, in turn, works to strengthen and grow our Companion Diocese Relationship with the Diocese of Central Tanganyika and Diocesan Bishop **Dickson Chilongani**. The Global Women's Fund, under the capable leadership of **Judi Counts**, also operates in close association with the Global Mission Commission. The 6th annual Global Mission Fair was held this past October 15 at St. Thomas' Episcopal Church, Mamaroneck, and participants were richly rewarded with stimulating speakers and fresh ideas for partnerships in global mission. With the overall theme of *God's Mission in Unexpected Places*, keynote speakers the **Rt. Rev. Griselda Delgado del Carpio**, Bishop of Cuba, and the **Rev. Dr. Bill Schwartz**, retired Archdeacon of the Diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf – along with a star-studded panel, offered stories and information about the challenges and hopes for the future of ministries within their dioceses. Reports on the Sustainable Development Goal projects of 2021 were heard, and the SDG Grants for 2022 were announced and awarded by **Bishop Allen Shin** and the **Rev. Deacon Pam Tang**, Chair of the SDG Grants Committee.

The **Rev. Yamily Bass-Choate** is our Diocesan Liaison for Global Mission, and in addition to providing numerous talents and skills for the Commission, she is once again coordinating a pilgrimage to the Diocese of Cuernavaca from February 4-18 2023 for those wishing to learn or improve upon their Spanish Language skills and learn about Mexican culture, to boot. We have a special relationship with the Diocese of Cuernavaca and its bishop: **Enrique**

Trevino Cruz, and if you are interested in learning more about it, please see Yamily+ or me and we will tell you all you want to know and then some!

I would be remiss in submitting this report if I did not mention the **Lambeth Conference 2022: God's Church for God's World**. The Lambeth Conference is a meeting of bishops of the Anglican Communion, and this year, most, but not all, of the bishops' spouses. Called by the Archbishop of Canterbury once every ten or so years, the Conference takes place over two weeks – this past year, July 27 – August 8. Much can be read about the conference online – and much more has been written and analyzed as the world-wide communion tries to figure out how to BE the church in the 21st century. I offer three brief observations.

First, the Lambeth Conference, like Diocesan Convention, is part of a longer narrative. That narrative, with respect to the Lambeth Conference, is the story of Anglicanism throughout the world. The conference has *before, during, and after* components, and the *before and after* components, in my view, are more important than the actual conference. Why? Because the lives of Anglicans worldwide are not just bishops, but laity and clergy who love the church and do their part in living out their faith. It is all of us, working together – not simply through “Instruments of Unity” – but through other resources available to us, that we engage God's mission in the world. In the Episcopal Church we are working to dismantle white supremacy and challenge Christian Nationalism. These issues of inequality and injustice exist world-wide as well, sometime in different disguises and cloaked in cultural practices – but where there are places and churches that do not *respect the dignity of every human being* – there is yet work to be done.

Second, the Lambeth Conference, like just about every other place in the world I can think of, was the scene not only of good things and connections happening, but also of the powers of evil which seek to separate and destroy us. For me, and I was not alone, this was palpable. Power plays, political maneuvering, and less than beneficent outside influences threatened to divide and conquer and destroy any good work that we were trying to do. And there's plenty of good that *can* come out of such a meeting. Educational materials on creation care and the need for the entire planet to participate are available. Work and education on violence against women and children is more effective if the Anglican Communion proclaims that this violence is wrong and a violation of God's dream for humankind. Racial reckoning and the worldwide oppression of darker skinned people will change when the powers-that-be are called to accountability and invited to repent and change the ways in which we do things. It may sound simple. But you and I know that it isn't. Let us pray, then, for God's ongoing help in working for justice.

Third, the Lambeth Conference, as one aspect of the totality of the Anglican Communion, needs to be reoriented. I know this is a tall order – but I mean it for the good of the whole. What if the conference were held somewhere in Africa or Asia or South America, rather than Canterbury? What if there were an opportunity to hold an Anglican Conference that includes lay people and clergy as well (and I know that these have happened in the past – but few and far between). What about transformation of the power structures *within* the Anglican Communion? I think of the Lenten phrase: *self-examination and repentance*, and I pledge to continue my own efforts to change and work and pray for better ways in which we can BE God's Church for God's World.

As ++Michael Curry would say: *Bear with me! I'm going to wrap this up soon!* Would all of the college chaplains present please stand? (time for applause of appreciation). I am deeply grateful for the privilege of serving in the Diocese of New York, with all of our history, heritage, dysfunctions, celebrations, ups, downs, and sideways – I am grateful. And I am particularly grateful for all of you, and the honor you extend to me in allowing me to serve with you. This includes my brother bishops: +Andy and +Allen, who are faithful, dedicated, loving men. As we work together through this next exciting time, let us pray for the wisdom to discern what is the

new treasure we have received or created, and what of the old treasure we need to take with us, while letting the vestiges of habits and processes that no longer serve us, die. We're on the cusp of something new, and with God's Grace, that newness will transform us into the human beings God calls us to be. I am reminded of the late Dag Hammarskjöld's hopeful prayer on New Year's Eve, 1953: *For all that has been: Thanks! To all that shall be: Yes!*