“Mending and Casting”
The Rev. Jim Trimble; St. James Episcopal Church, Pewee Valley KY
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“With John in jail, Jesus steps forward. Now he engages people and preaches John’s sermon. On the beach he saw Simon and Andrew fishing, casting their nets. Down the beach James and John were mending their nets.

Casting and mending is what it means to be a follower of Jesus. Casting and mending is the purpose of the church. Casting is positive action toward the unknown: the forward throwing of ourselves by faith and experience. The purpose of casting is increase!

The mending of nets is done so casting remains effective. Mending is healing; it's repair, reconciliation and redemption. The purpose of mending is also increase. I find it's the people who are being mended by God who are usually the best at casting -- and the people who have been gathered by a cast who are great at mending.”

These are words from Robert Wright, Bishop of Atlanta. Casting and Mending is the purpose of the church, what it means to be a follower of Jesus. These are the reasons we are gathered here this morning, and every Sunday morning, and throughout the week. We are to mend and cast…..cast and mend.

We do that in community, always in community. It’s hard to be a solitary Christian, which is why we practice this in groups. Since I mentioned gathering in groups, it’s time for a bit of Episcopal Church history and polity.

From the earliest followers of Christ, the work of worship, study, and service was done together. When enough people got together, they came up with ways of doing things like worship, study, and service so that there was some semblance of order. We can read about that in the Acts of the Apostles, and in what’s called The Didache, an ancient Christian rulebook.

So, when churches started forming, on the other side of the world, an order of public prayers, liturgies, organization, and church structure formed so that the faith communities could mend the lives, spirits, and souls, of all God’s people; and to cast ourselves, through our faith in God, to all our neighbors so that they may also find the love and redemption of Christ.

This organization of Church got pretty big, and formal, and human, but with Christ always at the center. After the Revolutionary War, we could no longer call this version of Anglicanism ‘the Church of England,' because we were now independent. We formed, through a national gathering of this denomination in 1789, the Episcopal Church. Coming from the Greek meaning ‘of a bishop,’ the Episcopal Church now
encompasses the United States, as well as many churches in Central America and Europe.

There are three main structures of governance in churches…..

---- congregational, where all decisions of that individual faith community are made right there among the people, calling their own clergy, coming up with their own rules of membership, worship, property, etc. The Episcopal Church is NOT congregational.

---- presbyterian, from the word meaning priest, where priests form the main body of formation and decision-making. The Episcopal Church is not Presbyterian.

---- episcopal, of a bishop, meaning bishops are chief pastors and shepherds of the people. This is what we are, but, unlike pure episcopal polity, bishops do not make all of the decisions. Laity and other clergy are also involved. This is how we operate in the United States, Central America, and parts of Europe.

For clarification, the central unit of organization in the Episcopal Church is the Diocese. Usually, this is a geographic area, under the leadership of a bishop. In the United States, many of the dioceses are bounded by state lines, like Colorado or Mississippi. Other states might have more than one diocese within their borders, like Kentucky or Texas. Still others straddle state lines, like Central Gulf Coast, or Rio Grande.

Each of the 110 dioceses of The Episcopal Church has a diocesan bishop, the executive officer, chief pastor, and shepherd. That bishop might have other assisting bishops, depending on the geographical size and/or population of that diocese.

Now, because all 10,000 Episcopalians in the Diocese of Kentucky cannot worship with Bishop Terry White every Sunday morning at Christ Church Cathedral in downtown Louisville, we have, what Bishop Claude Payne calls, “missionary outposts of the Gospel,” or local parishes or congregations.

In this diocese, there are 36 congregations from Louisville and Shelbyville all the way to Paducah and Hickman. Some are large, like St. Francis, with 2200 folks and St. Matthews with 1200; and some are small like Trinity Church in Fulton, or St. Paul’s in Hickman, with an average Sunday attendance of 6. All 36 of these congregations make up the Diocese of Kentucky.

Every year, the whole diocese gathers in Convention to reflect on the year of ministry that recently passed, and to prepare for the year ahead. People are elected to diocesan ministry offices, the diocese passes a budget, and we share Holy Eucharist to empower us to go back to our local churches to love and serve the Lord. In between Conventions, the diocese is governed by Trustees and Council, which carries out
ministry according to what we all decided at Convention. The Bishop, along with Trustees and Council, presides over the Diocese of KY.

Each congregation operates in a similar fashion. We meet once a year and elect folks to ministry and leadership work on the Vestry, present a budget, and share Holy Eucharist. In between annual meetings, the Vestry has fiduciary responsibility of the parish, and carries out the work of the Annual Meeting. The Rector, along with the Vestry, presides over the parish of St. James Episcopal Church.

In the same way, the National Church meets every three years, with 110 dioceses represented, and the Presiding Bishop, along with Executive Council, presides over the Episcopal Church. We are all connected in the Episcopal Church, in the 37 Churches of the Anglican Communion all over the world.

Our foundation began with Jesus giving his disciples what’s called the Great Commission.....spread the teachings of the resurrected Christ to all the nations of the world. God’s chosen people was not just limited to those in Israel, but has expanded to include everyone.

From those original 12 disciples, we believe that the anointing of bishops in Christ’s Church, which began with Peter, has continued unbroken to this day. In the Episcopal Church, it continued in 1784, when three Scottish bishops consecrated Samuel Seabury as Bishop of Connecticut & Rhode Island. A few weeks ago, Robert Skirving was ordained as Bishop of East Carolina, the 1,084th bishop of the Episcopal Church.

Every Anglican congregation of every province in the Anglican Communion, from England to Australia, from Japan to Canada, from France to Nigeria, depends on the other.

In the same way that members and families at St. James in Pewee Valley make financial pledges of commitment to continue this 167-year old ministry in Oldham County, this parish also pledges a financial commitment and covenant to the Diocese of KY, along with every other congregation, to support the ministry of all our sister parishes in Russellville, downtown Louisville, in Brandenburg, Gilbertsville and Shelbyville.

The diocesan ministry extends, not just to help those smaller churches, but to the running of a conference and retreat center, a summer camp for hundreds of youth, Jubilee ministry sites all over the state, three college chaplaincies and ministries, speakers, presentations, workshops, and college scholarships, among other things.

The Diocese of KY, along with each of the other 110 dioceses, also pledges financial support to The Episcopal Church to support the ministry of smaller dioceses, worldwide relief and development, Episcopal missionaries serving all over the globe, 11 Episcopal
seminaries in this country, and continuing education for clergy and laity in areas of Christian Formation, Worship, Leadership, and Mission, among others.

Then, the National Church, along with the 37 other provinces, pledges financial support to the Anglican Communion to help support the ministry of the Gospel of Jesus Christ all over the planet.

We are not isolated. We are not solitary. We are not an island unto ourselves. We are in relationship with churches, not just in Anchorage and Louisville, but in Missouri and Rhode Island, in Hong Kong and Scotland, in Kenya and Rwanda, in Spain and Brazil.

Everything we do as a faith community has an impact on Anglicans all over the globe. We hear evidence of our brothers and sisters every Sunday in the Prayers of the People.

Today, we prayed for the Diocese of Long Island in this country, as well as St. Paul's Church on Lowe Road in Louisville. Throughout the week, prayers will also be said for churches in North India, South Sudan, and Central Africa. And they will be praying for us.

Repeating the words of Bishop Wright,

“Casting is positive action toward the unknown: the forward throwing of ourselves by faith and experience. The mending of nets is done so casting remains effective. Mending is healing; it's repair, reconciliation and redemption.”

When Jesus called his apostles by the seashore, they were invited to follow him, but Jesus never said anything about them giving up fishing. Giving up their mending and casting, their casting and mending. He just redirected their work to people. All people.

That work continues today through an unbroken line of faithful Christians, including all of us here today, who wake up every morning responding to His call to serve and fish for people, ‘Follow me.’

Amen.