Rector Ramblings on . . . Diocesan Convention and Beyond

Our diocesan convention was last month, held on May 10 and 11. It seems like every year after convention, people ask me, “How was convention?”

My response is always, “It was convention. We met. We talked. We debated. We worshiped. We went home.”

This year I want to take this space to give a very brief report on the weekend. Yes, we did all of the above, and here are the pertinent points from the weekend as I saw it.

Our Friday keynote speaker was the Rt. Rev. Melissa Skelton, Bishop of the Diocese of New Westminster (for the western-geographically challenged, that’s basically Vancouver, BC). As a priest in Seattle she led a dying parish back to life. Among other things, she discussed:

- the need for intentional parish discernment to determine who and where they want to be;
- a Gather-Transform-Send model of being;
- that Redevelopment and Growth are results of continuous intervention; and
- the practice of doing what you do well all the time.

There were six resolutions for the body to consider, and they are as follows:

2019-01: Clergy and Lay Employee Compensation – Passed
  This is an annual resolution that ensures our employees are paid living wages
and almost always addresses a Cost of Living Adjustment. This year it also addressed the issue of clergy sabbaticals and was amended to begin allowing sabbaticals after three years (instead of six) due to the changing/shortening time clergy are serving congregations.

2019-02: Revision to Imperilment Canon – Passed
This was a revision to an existing canon that deals with at-risk/imperiled congregations. The rational for this change was that the original canon was seen as punitive and overly-focused on closing congregations. These revisions were designed to set forth criteria and steps that would proactively identify at-risk congregations earlier and offer vital assistance leading to congregational health.

2019-03: Revision to Canon 4-130 (Part-time Clergy) – Passed
This resolution was submitted as a way to recognize and more accurately reflect the broadening and more realistic possibilities of utilizing part-time clergy in smaller congregations. It looked to see part-time clergy as a reasonable long-term solution, rather than an emergency stopgap or transition to hospice.

2019-04: Repeal of Integrace Canon – Passed
In short, Integrace is a non-stock-not-for-profit corporation that is an official agency of the Diocese whose principal function was the development and operation of a ministry to the aging. The Integrace board has been in dialogue with ACTS Retirement-Life Communities to take over the operation of the three properties. This repeal formalizes agreements made by the Bishop, Standing Committee, and Council this past year.

2019-05: Reconfiguring Diocesan Apportionment for Churches in the Diocese of Maryland – Failed
The way the diocese calculates parish apportionment is extremely complicated and this was an attempt to begin studying how we might make the process simpler and more equitable. It was brought up that this has been done multiple times in the past, with the results always being the same – our current system, while complicated, is the most fair system we have found. Rather than taking time and hours for more study of what’s already been studied, the Convention voted it down.

2019-06: Racial Reconciliation – Passed Unanimously
This resolved that the Diocese of Maryland commit to taking tangible actions toward racial reconciliation in our local context, specifically regarding descendants of formerly enslaved African peoples; that we require diversity training for leaders every five years; that we continue fostering conversations around the understanding of
reparations and acts of racial reconciliation; and that congregations examine how their endowed wealth is tied to institutional slavery.

This could have been a hot-button topic, but there was little to no discussion about why this was not needed. Our diocese has a history of profiting from slavery and participating in segregation and other racially divisive issues and acts. If we as Christians are to truly see the face of God in others, if we are to truly seek and serve Christ in all people, if we are truly to respect the dignity of every human being, we must continue this dialogue and process of reparation and repairing.

Enclosed in this issue of Soundings is a pastoral letter from Bishop Sutton on this very issue. I encourage you to read it, along with the attached appendices (you will need to follow the link in the electronic version of Soundings). There are ways we can participate in repairing the damage done not only to people directly descended from the evil institution of slavery, but to those who profited from it. It’s not all about writing a check to make the problem go away. It’s about stepping into the breach caused by sin, saying, “No More,” and looking for ways to live out Christ-filled lives and looking for ways to live out our baptismal covenant of resisting evil, proclaiming the Good News, loving our neighbors, and striving for justice and peace. And, to paraphrase the bishop, “We won’t get there today, we may not get there tomorrow, but we will get there.”

May we here at Saint John’s continue to do the hard work of reconciliation and repairing the damage done to our society, our environment, and our world as we strive to help make God’s kingdom a present reality, on earth as it is in heaven.

Blessings,

Todd+
Music Notes

Violin, Organ, and Piano Recital

Pamela Evans, violin; Mark King, organ; and Nathan Strite, piano will perform a recital as part of the Music at Saint John’s Series on Friday, June 7 at 7:00 p.m. The program will include music for solo violin; solo organ; violin and organ; violin, organ and piano. The diverse composers of the repertoire include 20th century English composer, William Lloyd Webber, father of Andrew Lloyd Webber; German baroque composer, Johann Sebastian Bach; living American composer, Alfred Fedak; French Romantic composer, Cesar Franck; living Danish composer, Frederik Magle, known for his fusion of classical music with other genres; 20th century American composer, Harold Friedell; Italian Baroque composer, Tommaso Vitali; and German Romantic composer, Josef Rheinberger. Pamela Evans recently performed her Graduate Violin Recital, completing her Master’s Degree in Violin Performance. She lives in the Dayton, Ohio area and is married to Mark King’s nephew. Nathan Strite completed his Bachelor’s Degree in Organ Performance from Shepherd University in December, studying with Mark King. A reception will follow the recital. Be sure to invite family, friends and neighbors to attend this free musical event.

Biblical Reference to Trumpets

As the blast of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses would speak and God would answer him in thunder. – Exodus 19:19
As schools begin to close, graduations happen and we look forward to the peaceful, relaxing days of summer we forget how fast the time flies by. At St. John's, June starts off with the Parish Picnic, Learning Parties, Mayfest, Community Café, Vacation Bible School, Potomac Towers Meal, and more. Then there are the summer camps, vacation trips, ball games, fireworks, family reunions, and before you know it, it’s Labor Day Weekend.

Thru all the hustle and bustle of the Summer Vacation, did you remember your pledge? Well, there’s an APP for that! GivePlus Church is a FREE App you can download from your app store to make donations to St. John’s Parish. Just follow the instructions on the APP to make a one time or recurring donation, anytime, anywhere you have service. If you prefer you can make a donation online through the St. John’s website. Please contact Melonie Orr at the church office 301-733-2560 if you have any questions.

Always at your service

Download GivePlus Church to give now.

- Anytime, anywhere donations
- Safe and secure giving
- One-time or recurring gifts
- Easy account management

Search “GivePlus Church” to quickly find and download the app today!
We are in desperate need of volunteers for Children's Chapel. At this point all I need is a second adult to fulfill the guidelines set forth by *Safeguarding God's Children*. All you need to do is be in the room. If you want to lead a craft or game that goes with the lesson, that would be great. Children's Chapel is how we teach our little Episcopalians to be Adult Episcopalians. This is a very important ministry. This is the future of our church. Please prayerfully consider helping. You can contact me at youthmin.stjohns@myactv.net or call me at the office M-F 9am-1pm 301-733-2560 x101 or leave me a message and I will get back to you.

*Heidi McCusker, Volunteer Youth Leader*

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**Hospice Volunteer**

Hospice of Washington County is looking for additional volunteers. As the number of patients whom Hospice cares for continues to increase, volunteers are key members of the care/support team to people dealing with illness, grief, and loss. Volunteers allow family members the critical time needed to care for themselves as well as provide emotional support and/or companionship.

In addition to being present for family members, Hospice is also looking for professionals who will provide haircuts, massage therapy, music visits, and pet therapy.

The next volunteer training will take place on:
June 10, 13, and 19 from 5 – 9 pm at the Hospice building, 747 Northern Ave.

You can also contact Hospice at 301-791-6360 or info@hospiceofwc.org for more information.
Pastoral Care Ministry Committee

A new committee has been formed, thanks to the leadership of Peter Vazquez. We began meeting in February and are a part of the Service and Outreach Commission.

The condensed mission statement of this group is – People need to experience that they are known and loved, especially when they are living through a time of transition, change or suffering. We have a pastoral care structure that seeks to connect with people and offer them the support, prayer, and presence to make their journey more supported.

We reviewed the list of Parishioners who are homebound or in a facility to determine if and how we can support them and let them know they are not forgotten.

Our goals are to:

- Reach out more to those who are homebound, through Eucharistic Visitors, cards, phone calls, meals or gift cards to restaurants or a grocery store, Prayer Shawls or Prayer Squares.
- Coordinate efforts between Martha’s Table, Steven Ministers, Shawl Ministry, EM, etc.

We are not the replacement for Steven Ministers, but a way to reach out, support, and let those know who are not able to attend church on Sundays that they are still a part of St. John’s.

Fr. Todd will hold a training for those who would like to be a Eucharistic Minister and/or Eucharistic Visitor on Sunday, June 30, with a follow up for EM’s on July 14, and EV’s on August 11. He will share additional information on these trainings.

If you know of a Parishioner who could use some support, please contact Fr. Todd, Melo-nie, or Dusty (301-991-5619 or dustyg@myactv.net)

We also welcome anyone who would be interested in joining our group to help us reach out to those who are not able to be with us on Sundays for either a short or long term.

Dusty Graham
A Letter from Bishop Sutton

May 2019

Dear Friends in Christ,

We know that God has a great vision for all of us - the dream of our becoming and living as a Beloved Community. In this dream of God’s, all people experience dignity and abundant life, and see themselves and others as beloved children of God. The dream is deeply rooted in our Christian faith and expressed in our Baptismal covenant. It is a hope that promises transformation throughout the Church and the world by following the way of Christ, by actually striving to live in the way Christ taught us—respecting and loving every person, and advocating for true peace and true justice.

In the Diocese of Maryland, we are faithfully living into our vision of being a community of love. The imperative to love finds its roots in that long-awaited hope that God dreamed even at the foot of Mount Sinai, where the Israelites – a battered nation of freed slaves – were becoming the called people of God.

People in the United States, in the Episcopal Church, and in the Diocese of Maryland have inherited our share of breaches and broken places, especially with our legacy of slavery (See Appendix A). For generations the bodies of black and brown people did not belong to themselves, but were bred, used, and sold for the purpose of attaining wealth. Not only did our nation prosper under this evil institution, but our beloved Episcopal Church profited as well. However, as Jesus teaches us, a structure with a broken foundation cannot hope to stand.

The subject of reparations is mired in emotion; it is often mischaracterized and certainly largely misunderstood. It is a complex issue that involves economic, political, and sociological dimensions that are difficult to grasp without a willingness to engage more deeply than having a quick emotional response to the word. The issue highlights the racial divide among us, creates varying levels of resentment and suspicion, and accentuates a pain that has long plagued our country since its founding.

Reparations, at its base, means to repair that which has been broken. It is not just about monetary compensation. An act of reparation is the attempt to make whole again, and/or to restore; to offer atonement; to make amends; to reconcile for a wrong or injury.

Isn’t that our work in this broken world? As the Church, our primary mission is “restoring all people to unity with God and each other in Christ” (BCP, p. 855). This is...
our primary call and charge, and we take on this responsibility by praying, worshiping, proclaiming the Gospel, and promoting justice and love. Our mission is further met by understanding and living out our Baptismal Covenant (BCP, p. 416), not only with one another, but in the world as witnesses to God’s love for all of God’s people. We reaffirm these covenant vows whenever we baptize, confirm, or receive into this communion.

Our own commitment to this vision will require honest reflection and a holy devotion to reconciliation. Forgiveness alone is but one step in the long journey to reconcile our past with the present. We need to repair the broken places and wounds that we have all inherited from centuries of the degrading treatment of our fellow human beings.

The Episcopal Church, at its 78th General Convention in 2015, made a commitment to building the Beloved Community, in part through a devotion to racial healing. The four steps of the ‘Beloved Community’ process are Telling the Truth; Proclaiming the Dream; Practicing the Way of Love; and Repairing the Breach. Isaiah prophesied that we will be “repairers of the breach” (Isaiah 58:12) as we loosen the bonds of injustice, to let the oppressed go free and share our bread with the hungry.

This letter and accompanying materials lay out the beginning steps of what our commitment to “repair” – reparations – can look like in the Diocese of Maryland.

While we take our own share in God’s blessing through the saving work of Jesus Christ, we remain responsible to the call to care for those who are vulnerable, and we must continually be engaged in the work of reconciliation and repair. This is what being a community of love means. There is a heavy burden that comes with being called the people of God, and we must be willing to bear that burden to do those things that God says are important—to care for the poor, to welcome the stranger, and to love our neighbors as we love ourselves. Otherwise we risk becoming hypocrites or false prophets.

While the history of slavery is widely understood in the U.S., the continuing impact of its legacy is less understood – even in the Church. Some Episcopal bishops, clergy, and laity stood up for the fair and equal treatment of African American slaves and free people. Bishops from James Kemp in the early 19th century to William Whittingham in the latter half of the 19th century to Robert Ihloff in the 21st century; and many white lay people and clergy, such as Mary Miller and the Rev. Bill Fallowfield (see Appendix B), worked for the well-being of African Americans as equal to all children of God.

More often, however, Episcopal bishops, clergy, and laity supported segregation of diocesan schools, churches, and institutions through the 1960’s. Episcopal clergy and diocesan leadership were active participants in the continued segregation of housing and schools in Baltimore City and across the State of Maryland. The symptoms and wounds of that old
sin continue to poison our society and threaten the health of the Body of Christ of which we are all a part.

After the hard-fought abolition of slavery, there was a fateful denial in our nation of reparations for freed African-American people for their centuries of undeserved bondage, even though in many instances white plantation owners received reparations in the form of compensation for the losses they incurred from the Civil War and the end of slavery.

Racism and greed fueled that basic injustice, and those attitudes have poisoned race relations ever since. From the implementation of Jim Crow laws, lynching, segregation, redlining, job discrimination and unequal funding for majority African-American school districts, to our own segregated church demographics, we see that we have not fully reckoned with our past. We are not yet fully a community of love.

The concepts of power and powerlessness have strong emotional impact for each of us. Most of us experience one or both during our lifetimes. The ability to have control of our lives can give us a general sense of security and well-being, while the inability to control our lives leads to a sense of powerlessness, to insecurity, depression and anger. There are consequences to constantly feeling powerless. When we have limited agency, it is incredibly hard to build a life of success, security, and love. Repeated exposure to trauma can lead to post traumatic stress disorder, which only enhances the feeling of powerlessness, as well as further social isolation. As we know from our own family lives, psychological damage from all forms of abuse, verbal and physical, trauma and addiction, penetrates generations. Living under these circumstances is not a recipe for success. This simply isn't part of God's dream for us. We Christians are called to weep with our God in sorrow over the love denied our human family members. We are called to weep, pray, love, and then act—to repair and reconcile.

It is time for all of us to understand how power gained by force and wielded unevenly impacts African-Americans in this country. We can all celebrate the tremendous strides that have been made in racial attitudes in our nation, and we are very proud of the accomplishments of many individuals who have overcome great odds to achieve success.

But for the millions of descendants of American slaves who are trapped in a pernicious cycle of hopelessness, poverty, and rage due to their real experience of racial segregation, redlining, inferior schools and the like, the widespread assumption that everyone can pull themselves up by their own bootstraps is a long way from being accurate. They know that the odds are against them on so many fronts: they cannot change their environment, and they cannot change the color of their dark skin.

All of these factors have played into creating a lack of power for brown and black people. This lack is a social problem: it goes beyond an individual’s character and will. It is time
for all of us to move towards a place of acceptance of humans who want the same things we do, but who have not been found to be worthy of those desires by the dominant society.

Self-examination, learning about how the self reacts emotionally to those who are different and acknowledging preconceived expectations of another race or culture that lie inside the human being is vital to creating an environment where communication between the races can exist (See Appendix C).

Beloved, it will be by our lives and actions with regard to racial reconciliation that we will speak most prophetically to the world. In this way, we are writing a “living Epistle” to the whole Church. This holy missive was begun with God’s call of freedom to the people of Israel in Egypt, continued with Jesus’ proclamation of freedom to the captives in the synagogue, and Paul’s invitation to his friend Philemon to free his slave Onesimus. It continues through the action and dedication of our forebears in the Civil Rights era who were convicted by the Gospel imperative of love and justice.

The biblical mandate to justice (see Appendix B) is to hold leadership accountable for the fair and equal treatment of all God’s people. All of us have been taught to love everyone regardless of their race and human condition. However, we must come to acknowledge that there can be no love without justice, and there can be no justice without some form of repairing an injustice. Through prayerful and dedicated study, combined with deep discussion and loving actions, I believe we can do the work of repair. Through reparations, we can be leaders in the long-awaited process of reconciliation, of creating God’s dream for us—a truly Beloved Community.

Finally, please know that our conversation on reparations in the Church is, and should be, different from the ones we hear in the political arena. For us, “repairing the breach” is not a mandate from a government or leader, but a mandate from our God to commit to the rebuilding of a relationship between the world and God, between individuals and communities and to seek a better world for our children. The Sutton Scholars® High School Enrichment Program is a good example of a type of reparations. This diocesan program is designed to help inner city youth, particularly black youth, to realize their life's hopes and dreams, and equip them to become the young men and women that God intended them to be. It empowers them not to fall prey to the many traps that often confront them – including the prevailing belief that they are “less than” others in our society. Programs such as this have proven to be a significant contribution to helping young black youth achieve success and stay out of the criminal justice system. These kinds of programs are invaluable; might the diocese fund such initiatives as these to repair and heal the past?

Please join me in studying the issue of reparations and prayerfully consider how all of us in the Diocese of Maryland – of whatever race, background, or national origin – can to-
gether embark on this journey of repairing the breach we’ve all inherited from our nation’s past.

Attached are other resources to help us all engage in this work together, including a history of the legacy of slavery in our diocese; a look at biblical and theological views on slavery; a description of the psychological ramifications of the powerlessness created by slavery; and a series of reflection questions. A workshop prepared by the diocesan Reparations Committee will be offered this fall. I urge you to enter into this holy work with me. As a community of love we will collaborate, question, and discuss how we heal the past through our present actions. In so doing, we all proclaim “the message of reconciliation to which God has called us as ambassadors for Christ.” (II Corinthians 5:18-20)

Blessings and peace,

+Eugene

Appendix A: Diocesan History of Slavery
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1VPzqt8XNWNDiDtx_qN05OsTmsdwDYXS/view

Appendix B: Biblical and Theological Views of Slavery
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1QcBPiMQ9IA4bPTZ84Xv51a1DqS7xFH/view

Appendix C: Power and Powerlessness – Psychological Ramifications and the Future
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1fpaq8-FNvahMHH0TNapQrbtaq7MuJz1-/view

235th Diocesan Convention

For those of you who would like more information about the 235th Diocesan Convention, you can follow this link:

https://episcopalmaryland.org/diocesan-governance/diocesan-convention/

It has resolutions, election results, and videos of both Bp. Sutton’s address and Bp. Skelton’s sermon and keynote address.
**HATS OFF TO:**

- Eagle Scout Kevin Abeles! Kevin started with Troop 10 in 2011. He attended Philmont High Adventure Camp in Cimarron, NM in 2014, and the National Scout Jamboree in 2017. In his troop he has held the positions of Scribe, Chaplain, Assistant Patrol Leader, and Patrol Leader. For his Eagle project Kevin made two Buddy Benches for the playground at Maugansville Elementary School. He is the 115th Eagle Scout in Troop 10, following in the footsteps of his brothers Will and Charlie.

Keep me in the loop by sending information to my email address: uofapsu@verizon.net. Feel free also to pull me aside to share your good news so I may share it with St. Johns.

*Kelly Slocum*
HAPPY BIRTHDAY

John Miller 6/4
Tamara Martinez 6/5
Evvie Williams 6/5
Betty Markle 6/8
Allison Jarrett 6/9
Leighton Younger 6/9
Melissa Hutton 6/10
Jack Thompson 6/10
Linda Gray Jones 6/11
Suzanne Abeles 6/12
Lou Lamb 6/12
Stephny Lietuvnikas 6/13
Brenda (Duffy) Miles 6/13
Kathy Marks 6/15
Ken Brown Jr 6/16
Mary Ballard 6/17
Mikaela Mummert 6/17
June Burger 6/19
Tracey Happel 6/21
Jason Weibel 6/21
David Anderson 6/23
Will Godwin 6/23
Florence Forbes 6/24
Cece Young 6/24
CJ Sealing 6/25
Deanna Soulis 6/25
Monica Renee Mcclary 6/27
Ethel Kovacs-Myers 6/27
Dolores Carpenter 6/28
Barbara Creager 6/28
Caitlin Fuller 6/28
John Ashbaugh 6/30
Judy Raysely 6/30

Happy Anniversary!

Jack & Betty Thompson 6/9
Fred & Caroline Wright 6/11
Russ & Kathy Marks 6/14
David & Stacey Abeles 6/16
Kati & John Webb 6/16
Ron & Judy Myers 6/17
Paul & Sally Perryman 6/17
Jerry & Sue Sowers 6/17
Bill & Deanna Soulis 6/23
Gaye & Bill McGovern 6/29