



Vital Practices

for leading congregations

Governance

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Our Story

BY SHERYL KUJAWA-HOLBROOK

Our Roots

By the time of the American Revolution, the Anglican Church within the new United States of America had already developed characteristics that distinguished it from its parent, the Church of England.

Anglicans in the former British colony organized themselves into a new kind of church, modeled uniquely after their new government, with the first church Constitution the world had ever known, and with its own Prayer Book. Despite the political and ecclesiastical break with England, the founders of the Episcopal Church retained the historic orders of bishops, priests, and deacons, yet also determined that the church would be governed democratically through councils of both clergy and laity. From the beginning, laity played a central role in the governance of the church, founding congregations,

calling clergy, and providing for the spiritual and social welfare of their communities. As was the case in the government of the new nation, a great deal of authority was vested at the local level.

When the American church finally obtained bishops – creatively running an “episcopal” church for over 200 years without them – these bishops, as did other clergy of the era, had to establish their authority by preaching, teaching, and administering and raising funds, without the government backing they experienced in Britain. Much of the struggle in shaping the identity of the early Episcopal Church involved developing structures and a mission for a church that was to be a democratic institution, yet grounded in ancient traditions, and radically responsive to its new context.

Our Values

The governance of the Episcopal Church today shares many of the same values as our eighteenth-century ancestors. We are a church that values representative government and democratic participation by all the orders of the church. We value spiritual freedom and shared authority. We trust that people in churches can govern local affairs. We respect diversity, and at the same time strive to build unity across our differences. We believe in the importance of the legislative process, and through the General Convention, we gather every three years to govern our church as one of the largest legislatures in the world. The Episcopal Church invests a great deal of confidence in its people's ability to govern. In a real sense, to be Episcopalian is to participate in the governance of the church. At the same time, it takes practice to effectively participate in the structures of the Episcopal Church. That is why it is so important that we preach and teach our unique heritage as a means to furthering democratic participation in the governance of the church.

The liturgical renewal movements of the 1950s and 1960s that emphasized the importance of baptism and the priesthood of all believers, further emphasized the idea that all the baptized have

a role in the ministry and governance of the church. The 1979 Book of Common Prayer with its renewed emphasis on baptismal living communicates a vision of the ministry of the church as carried out by the whole people of God, and thus, has deep implications for how we govern if we are to be faithful Christians. In the Episcopal Church we believe that authority for ministry comes with our baptism. The recovery of baptismal living through the Prayer Book builds the life of the church around two interrelated focal points; the life of the community through worship, mutual care, and learning; and, mission through reconciliation, servant hood, and proclamation. Ministry is showing forth Christ to the world in all of these ways; governance involves our participation in the structures and processes that support ministry. If we are to be faithful to our mission in the world, then the church cannot be a static, self-involved institution. Rather, the baptized are called to participate in a church that is always changing, that is mission-centered, and that concerns itself with the larger world and all of creation.

Looking towards our Future

Many stressed nonprofit organizations today, including churches, are now asking questions about the degree of governance the church requires; how do we to

balance the need for order by an equally strong need for creativity and risk-taking? Key to baptismal living in church governance is the acknowledgement that church structures have, at times, stifled the generosity of the Spirit with a need for control. This acknowledgement is in no way a criticism of the many who exercise profound ministries faithfully every day. But it does speak to the realities of many small congregations and dioceses where diminishing numbers face expanding workloads and feelings of frustration as they perpetuate models of governance that are outmoded and out of balance with the priorities of ministry and mission in a particular place.

The late Jim Kelsey, former bishop of the Diocese of Northern Michigan, believed that the heart of baptismal living is the shift from consumer-based to participatory ecclesiology and realigning church structures from providing ministry for members of congregations as clients, to models where governance is shared and there is mutual respect between laity and clergy. Many congregations and dioceses in the Episcopal Church do not have the ability to sustain multiple staff positions or complicated committee structures now or in the foreseeable future. Rather, effective church governance today depends

on leaner models of church and ministry which better utilize the available gifts and skills of all. The earliest Christian communities were governed by structures that were fluid and adaptive, and that enabled them to grow and to respond creatively in the midst of enormous challenges. So, too, our structures of governance need to be re-evaluated and reshaped to allow our churches and dioceses to thrive. As people of faith, we know that the reign of God will not ultimately be built on how many committees we have, but on the way we shape our communities and the quality of life therein – *new* life, not just reordered life.

Baptismal living, as a recovery of ancient forms of church governance, is an opportunity for congregations and dioceses, as well as the church as a whole, to incarnate the life and freedom of the gospel. Answers to these concerns are embedded in our understanding of Episcopal polity and our Anglican heritage, both of which inform our distinctiveness within the Christian tradition, and offer pathways in how to govern our communities, and to work toward the healing and wholeness that the world craves.

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theologian. She is currently professor of practical theology and religious education at Claremont School of Theology, and professor of Anglican Studies at Bloy House, the Episcopal Theological School at Claremont. In addition to her work as a teacher, workshop, conference and retreat leader, she is the author of a dozen books and numerous articles, reviews and curricula.

Resources

- Christopher Webber. *Welcome to the Episcopal Church*. Harrisburg: Morehouse, 1999. http://books.google.com/books/about/Welcome_to_the_Episcopal_Church.html?id=NMWnsGWFs5gC
- James Dator, with Jan Nunley. *Many Parts, One Body. How the Episcopal Church Works*. New York: Church Publishing, 2010. <https://www.churchpublishing.org/products/index.cfm?fuseaction=productDetail&productID=7062>
- James E. Griffiss. *The Anglican Vision*. Cambridge: Cowley Publications, 1997. <http://www.amazon.com/Anglican-Vision-James-E-Griffiss/dp/1561011436>
- Sheryl A. Kujawa-Holbrook and Fredrica Harris Thompsett. *Born of Water, Born of Spirit. Supporting the Ministry of the Baptized in Small Congregations*. Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2010. <http://www.alban.org/bookdetails.aspx?id=8544>

Editor's Letter

Greetings.

I like to know how things work. From an early age, I learned if I had a basic understanding of this, I made better decisions.

This practice led me to my first – and only – computer-programming course. It was in the early 80s, computers were becoming an office staple and ‘computer error’ was a common refrain when something didn’t go as expected. I wasn’t buying this excuse, so enrolled in a course to learn how a computer worked – and where the likely source of these errors lay.

Flash forward to 2003 and my first General Convention of the Episcopal Church. I had press credentials, responsibility to set up media opportunities for representatives from Episcopal Divinity School, and no clue about how our church was governed. Working at a seminary, there was a course I could take. It made such a difference: it was my first General Convention and I was able to explain the what, why, and how not only to secular media, but also other Episcopal media.

As congregational leaders you have responsibility related to the governance. And, while governance – or polity as it is often referred to within the Church – may not make your ‘top 10’ list of the most interesting topics, a working knowledge of how the Episcopal Church works may prove to be helpful, especially in understanding how decisions are made at the diocesan and denominational level – sometimes described as a cumbersome and messy process.

For the next two months, ECF Vital Practices and Vestry Papers will offer articles and resources related to the way we govern ourselves as congregations and as a denomination.

Our May content includes:

■ “Our Story” by Sheryl Kujawa-Holbrook explores the roots of our democratic style of governance and invites us to consider ways to balance an organization’s need for order with its equally important need for creativity and risk-taking.

■ A large number of Episcopalians have roots in

another Christian faith. In “¿De Arriba o de Abajo?” (“From Above or Below?”), Alberto Cutié shares key differences in governance between the Episcopal and Roman Catholic churches. Available in both Spanish and English.

■ “Being on the Same Page” by Ron Pogue, reminds us of the value of our congregation’s governing documents and how they can be a useful tool for decision making.

■ In “Knowledge is Power,” William Doubleday introduces congregational leaders to the resources available to them in Canon 7: Of Business Methods in Church Affairs.

■ “Connecting the Dots” by Bonnie Anderson makes the connection between congregational, diocesan, and denominational governance reaching back to 1782 when William White proposed an ‘unheard of and revolutionary process for selecting bishops.

- Lelanda Lee's reflection on "Our Call to Leadership" looks at how cultural context impacts our understanding of invitations to leadership and how recognizing these differences may encourage greater diversity of leaders. *Available in both Spanish and English.*
- In "Episcopal and Baptist Governance," David Perkins shares his experience of being called to Baptist ministry as a 14 year old and how 17 years later, he accepted a call to ordained ministry in the Episcopal Church. His description of these two very different processes underscores the difference between the governance of these two faith traditions.
- "Called to Common Mission" by Mary Frances Schjonberg and adapted by Nancy Davidge shares the story of the first Lutheran Episcopal Congregation in Florida, creating a church that is boldly inclusive, intentionally challenging, and joyfully Christian.

Fun fact: Did you know? The Episcopal Church's General Convention is one of the largest legislatures in the world.

I invite you to add to this content by sharing your stories and resources related to congregational governance in the Your Turn section and by posting comments related to our articles, blog posts, or other content.

Faithfully,

Nancy

Nancy Davidge

PS: To make it easier for congregational leaders to find the resources offered through ECF Vital Practices, please consider adding a link to ECF Vital Practices to your website. Here's how: Using your websites 'add a link' tool, insert our full URL – <http://www.ecfvp.org/>

¿De Arriba o de Abajo?

BY ALBERTO CUTIÉ

Recuerdo un chiste que hacíamos a menudo en mis años de seminario:

¿Cuántos sacerdotes se necesitan para cambiar un bombillo?

La respuesta: Ninguno; pues eso lo hace el seminarista.

Ese chiste, aunque es bastante tonto, lo que enfatiza es un sistema jerárquico donde la autoridad para tomar decisiones y hacerlo casi todo viene del estado clerical, mientras los laicos y los que no son ordenados sirven para rezar, pagar y obedecer (en inglés decimos: pay, pray and obey).

Creo que en términos de eclesiología la gran diferencia que existe entre la Iglesia Episcopal y la Iglesia Católica Romana - de la cual provienen un gran número de nuestros miembros hispanos y nuevos miembros en general - es precisamente nuestro "sistema de gobierno" (en inglés, "polity"). Nuestra visión eclesiológica en la Iglesia Episcopal depende de Convenciones Generales, con la Cámara de Obispos y la Cámara de Delegados, sínodos, convocatorias locales y diocesanas para tomar decisiones sobre la vida de la iglesia. Incluso, a nivel local en

cada parroquia tenemos la Junta Parroquial (en inglés, "Vestry") que administra los bienes de la iglesia y comparte la autoridad de dicha administración con el clero.

Realmente, esta visión colegial y más abierta de gobierno se comenzó a implementar también en la Iglesia Católica Romana después del Concilio Vaticano II (1962-65) con la creación de consejos parroquiales a nivel local y los sínodos internacionales que aun se celebran en Roma, pero con el paso de los años se ha comprobado que en la práctica los únicos que toman decisiones formales son los obispos; esto incluye al Obispo de Roma que no se le exige consultar a nadie para tomar decisiones que afecten la iglesia universal. El laicado, aun, no tiene voz, ni voto - en casi nada de lo que ocurre - incluyendo en la selección de obispos y sacerdotes para la comunidad local.

Además, para gran parte de los latinos que venimos de países donde la democracia es muy frágil - o casi inexistente - nuestra visión de iglesia democrática y con una autoridad compartida se convierte en un reto especial a nivel local. Muchos no estamos acostumbrados a ser

consultados para tomar decisiones o a participar activamente en un sistema de dialogo tan abierto, pero tan exigente a la vez. No cabe duda que nuestra forma de "ser iglesia" requiere más dialogo y mucha más colaboración entre clérigos y laicos - incluso nuestros obispos dependen de la aprobación de los líderes diocesanos. Este modelo de autoridad es algo completamente nuevo para gran parte de los latinos que provienen de una cultura influenciada por la Iglesia Romana; especialmente para quienes nunca han tenido contacto directo con las iglesias de la reforma. Muy a menudo me sorprende encontrar que aun existen sacerdotes romanos que nunca han trabajado en un ambiente ecuménico y que no tienen idea alguna de como funcionan las iglesias al cruzar la calle de la suya.

Por mi parte, yo considero que nuestra forma de gobierno en la Iglesia Episcopal es una gran riqueza, y aunque entiendo que algunos colegas lo consideran un dolor de cabeza, estoy convencido de que si Jesús pudiera elegir un sistema eclesiológico hoy día - entre las miles de denominaciones cristianas que existimos

en el mundo – le gustaría mucho nuestra forma de tomar decisiones y de “ser iglesia”. Por algo el mismo Señor Jesús nos dice, “El que quiera ser grande entre ustedes, deberá servir a los demás...” (Mc. 10:43). Nuestra forma de gobierno nos presenta una oportunidad para no solo predicar el evangelio desde el pulpito, sino para poner el evangelio en práctica con nuestra forma de mostrar el servicio y la humildad cristiana que requiere el evangelio de cada persona que sea capaz de aceptar el llamado a servir a Dios como laicos, obispos, sacerdotes o diáconos. De forma especial, creo que los laicos del siglo XXI se sienten bien al saber que se les toma en cuenta y que la iglesia no es una especie de dictadura espiritual, sino que es el Cuerpo de Cristo; en el cual todos tenemos voz y voto.

Por eso quizás nuestro mayor reto es no hablar tanto sobre “la manera episcopal de hacer las cosas” o nuestro “sistema de gobierno” (polity), sino poder llegar al punto de darnos cuenta que esta forma de servir y compartir autoridad es realmente lo que exige el evangelio de Jesucristo para su iglesia. Mientras nuestra forma de operar se vea como un sistema heredado de otros sistemas políticos y no como consecuencia del evangelio de Jesucristo, quizás muchos nunca lleguen a entender porque hacemos lo que hacemos. Estoy con-

vencido que Dios nos llama a vivir nuestra fe en la Iglesia Episcopal y en la tradición anglicana, porque nuestras luchas – casi todas - están basadas en buscar la voluntad de Dios para todos, sin excluir a nadie. Y esa lucha incluye nuestra forma de funcionar y de tomar decisiones.

Alberto Cutié es el padre de la Iglesia de la Resurrección, Miami en la Diócesis del Sureste de la Florida.

Resources

- How Resolutions Move through General Convention http://www.episcopalcommunicators.org/storage/Connecticut%20GC%20Resolutions_March09.pdf
- The Polity of the Episcopal Church <http://www.slideshare.net/RSGracey/introduction-to-the-polity-of-the-episcopal-church-part-1>

From Above or Below?

BY ALBERTO CUTIÉ

I remember a joke we used to frequently tell during my years as a seminarian:

How many priests are required to change a light bulb?

The answer: None. Seminarians do it.

This joke, even though it's a bit silly, highlights a hierarchical problem where the authority to make decisions--and practically to do anything--comes from the clerical state, while lay people and those who are not ordained are expected to pay, pray and obey.

I think that in ecclesiological terms the major difference between the Episcopal Church and the Roman Catholic Church, from where many of our new and Hispanic members are coming from, is precisely our polity. Our ecclesiological vision in the Episcopal Church depends on the General Conventions, the House of Bishops, the House of Delegates, synods, local, and diocesan convocations to make decisions concerning church life. Even at the parish level we have the vestry, which manages the assets of the church and shares management

authority with the clergy.

The Roman Catholic Church adopted this collegial and more open vision of government, after the Second Vatican Council (1962-65), with the creation of vestries at the local level and the international synods that are still in place in Rome today. However, as time has passed it has become evident that in reality the only ones who actually make formal decisions are bishops; this includes the Bishop of Rome, who is not required to consult anyone, even when making decisions that affect the universal church. Even now, the laity has practically no voice or vote in anything including choosing bishops and priests for their own communities.

For many Latinos coming from countries where democracy is either fragile or nonexistent the idea of a democratic church, where authority is shared, is a difficult concept to understand, particularly at the local level. Many of us aren't used to being consulted in the decision making process or in participating in an open and demanding system of dialogue. There is no question that the

Episcopal Church's way of "being church" requires much more dialogue and cooperation between the clergy and laity, given that our bishops need to have the approval of the diocesan leadership in all matters (remembering that our bishops are elected by members of their diocese).

This model of authority is completely new for many Latinos coming from cultures influenced by the Roman Catholic Church, particularly to those who were never in direct contact with churches shaped by the Reformation. It often surprises me to find that there are still Roman Catholic priests who've never worked in an ecumenical atmosphere and who have no idea how the church across the street functions.

Personally, I think that our Episcopal polity is immensely valuable and even though I understand that some colleagues think it can be cumbersome, I am confident that if Jesus could choose an ecclesiastical system today from among the thousands of Christian denominations that exist in the world, He would be very pleased

with our decision making process and with our way of “being church”. There is a reason why the Lord Jesus himself tells us that “Whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant...” (Mark 10:43).

Our denomination emphasizes not only preaching the Gospel from the pulpit, but also to practicing the Gospel with our way of showing the spirit of service and the Christian humility required by the Gospel from each and every person capable of accepting the call to serve God whether they are lay people, bishops, priests or deacons. In a special way, I believe that the laity of the 21st century is strengthened knowing that it’s acknowledged and that the Church is not a form of spiritual dictatorship but rather the Body of Christ where all have a voice and a vote. Perhaps that is why our greatest challenge is not so much talking about “the Episcopalian way of doing things” or our “polity”, but is instead realizing that this way of serving and sharing authority is what Jesus Christ’s gospel truly demands of the Church.

Because our modus operandi is often seen as a system inherited from other political systems, and not as a consequence of the gospel of Jesus Christ, many may never understand why we oper-

ate the way that we do. I am sure that God calls us to live our faith in the Episcopal Church and the Anglican tradition, because much of our struggle is based on seeking the will of God for everyone, without exception.

I am convinced God has called us to live out our faith in The Episcopal Church and in the Anglican tradition because our struggles – almost all of them – are based in seeking God’s will for all people. I believe this struggle also includes reflecting on how we function and make decisions.

Alberto Cutié is the rector at the Church of the Resurrection, Miami in the Diocese of Southeastern Florida. He is a former Roman Catholic priest.

Resources

- How Resolutions Move through General Convention http://www.episcopalcommunicators.org/storage/Connecticut%20GC%20Resolutions_March09.pdf
- The Polity of the Episcopal Church <http://www.slideshare.net/RSGracey/introduction-to-the-polity-of-the-episcopal-church-part-1>

Being on the Same Page

BY RONALD D. POGUE

Years ago, shortly after my arrival at a new parish, I sought the advice of my bishop regarding some confusion we were having over roles, responsibilities, policies, and procedures. After listening to my description of the situation, he said, "Consult your governing documents."

That was wise advice and it has benefitted the congregations I have served, both as a settled rector and as a transition specialist. Governing documents, such as bylaws, policy manuals, and articles of incorporation, are essential to good order in the life of a congregation or church organization. They describe agreed upon roles, responsibilities, policies, and procedures and reflect compliance with and accession to governing documents of the diocese and the general Church.

When a new priest arrives or when new vestry members assume office, organizational documents should be reviewed so everyone can get on the same page. Conducting the business of the congregation in compliance with the organizational documents will help everyone stay on the same page.

The canons of most dioceses require that bylaws and articles of incorporation be reviewed by the diocesan chancellor and signed by the bishop. This requirement extends to amendments and revisions. Copies of the most recently approved bylaws and articles from congregations and organizations are usually kept on file in diocesan offices. Many dioceses have model documents available either on their websites or through the bishop's office.

Printed copies can be made available in the church office or in some central location. Congregations with websites often post electronic copies of organizational documents for all to see. Providing vestries with a notebook that includes organizational documents is a good practice. Members of the vestry can also file copies of minutes, financial statements, and correspondence in their notebooks throughout their term of office. When vestries have an annual retreat or organizational meeting, it is good to take the time to review organizational documents and established policies and procedures.

From time to time, changes in the needs of a congregation, changes in state or federal law, or changes in general or diocesan canons may make revision of organizational documents necessary. The process for making revisions and amendments is normally described in the documents themselves. The last thing one wants to hear is, "We know the bylaws say thus and so, but here's how we actually do it." If operating in a different manner from what is described in the governing documents seems advisable, it may be time for a revision. Simply setting aside the agreed upon procedure in one matter can easily lead to disregarding procedural norms altogether, which can lead to conflict and potentially leave those in leadership vulnerable to litigation.

Diocesan Safe Church policies require employees of congregations and organizations of the Episcopal Church to receive specific kinds of training and to repeat that training periodically. Members of vestries and those who work with children and youth must also receive specific training periodically. Members of vestries and those who work with

children and youth must also receive specific training periodically. Clergy and vestries are expected to see that everyone is in compliance with these requirements. Each congregation and organization should maintain files that contain records with names of persons who have taken the required training and the dates. Safe Church training provided by the Church Pension Group strongly emphasizes knowing and following the policies and those who are trained are often required to sign a statement saying that they have read the policies and agree to abide by them. It is important to make those policies available to everyone who is under the requirement to receive training and to post the policies for everyone to see.

If there is an employee manual, it should be periodically reviewed by persons who are familiar with employment laws and practices. Employees should be provided with the current manual and it should be a condition of employment that they sign a statement that they have read and agree to abide by the policies and procedures set forth therein. A good employee file should contain: a written position description, an application for employment, documentation of compensation, a description of benefits,

the background check report, the Safe Church training record, and certain other documents as may be required by church, state, or federal laws. The clergy in charge should see that the files are complete, up to date, and kept in a secure location.

Attention to these resources fosters healthy congregational life because governing documents are vehicles for getting on the same page and staying there. When the leadership of a congregation or church organization is familiar with and faithful to its governing documents, it reduces confusion and misunderstanding, increases clarity regarding roles and responsibilities, and conserves time and energy.

Ronald D. Pogue is Interim Rector at Calvary Episcopal Church in Ashland, Kentucky. He has served as a rector in the Diocese of Texas and as an interim rector in the Diocese of Kansas and the Diocese of Lexington. Ron is the founder and moderator of Unapologetically Episcopalians, a member of the Board of Transition Ministries in the Episcopal Church, and is certified as a Professional Transition Specialist with the Interim Ministry Network.

Resources

- Safe Church <https://www.cpg.org/active-clergy/insurance/preventing-sexual-misconduct/overview/>
- Unapologetically Episcopalians <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Unapologetically->

Knowledge is Power

BY WILLIAM A. DOUBLEDAY

For 25 years, I taught courses in congregational leadership and in canon law at Episcopal seminaries. An essential learning goal for my students was developing a familiarity with Canon 7: Of Business Methods in Church Affairs in the Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church (pp.39-41 in the 2009 Edition). (Contrary to some rumors, the Episcopal Church and its congregations are not “Mom and Pop stores” authorized to operate on an informal basis.)

I am pleased to share a summary of key provisions in Canon 7, which apply to parishes with readers of ECF Vital Practices. (See the Constitution and Canons for precise language):

Sec. 1c. Records shall be made and kept of all trusts and permanent showing at least the following: 1) Source and date; 2) Terms governing the use of principal and income; 3) To whom and how often reports of condition are to be made; 4) How the funds are invested.

Commentary: It is illegal to spend endowments that are designated for one purpose for another. The fund to maintain the organ must

not be spent to pay the Clergy Pension Fund Assessment. It is irresponsible to spend more than 5% of the value of the average value of the endowment over thirteen quarters – when we do so, the endowment rapidly begins to disappear. I once led a vestry retreat for a parish that thought of itself as historically resourced and endowed. That myth was soon history when we determined that they had been drawing over 19% over several years.

Sec. 1d. Treasurers of funds that exceed \$500 annually should be bonded.

Commentary: I have encountered too many parishes where at least some funds are not properly recorded and accounted for. Some may well be in boxes under someone’s bed. The existence of bonded treasurers is practically a myth. I once preached in a New York City parish where three collections were taken during the service. I was told only one was accounted for to the diocese. I was stunned when I was handed my honorarium – one hundred \$1 dollar bills in an elastic band. Some dioceses provide support services for parish

accounting. I knew of one diocese where the bishop, who had an MBA from Harvard, carefully reviewed financial spreadsheets from all the parishes in the diocese. In reviewing one parish’s annual summary, the Bishop discovered the parish only reported open plate offering in July when the rector was on vacation and then found out that this pattern of malfeasance had been going on for years.

Sec. 1e. Books of accounts shall be kept so as to provide the basis for satisfactory accounting.

Commentary: Quick Books has made accounting for small organizations much easier. Nonetheless, some small congregations may not have the human resources to make bookkeeping happen in appropriate ways. I recently learned of a congregation where, for nearly 20 years the rector did ALL the budget preparation, bookkeeping, and bill paying for the congregation with a nominal parish treasurer signing off on reports to the vestry. The ordinal does not put such work in the job description of a priest and this approach has insufficient safeguards for the priest, the parish, and the concept of fiduciary

responsibility.

Too many parish treasurers serve almost in perpetuity or until they have been exhausted by the position. Rotation in lay leadership roles serves many positive functions and offers significant safeguards against error or fraud.

Sec. 1f. All accounts of parishes, missions, or other institutions shall be audited annually by an independent certified public accountant, an independent licensed accountant, or such audit committee as may be authorized by appropriate diocesan authority.

Commentary: Audits by informal audit committees are all too common. They rarely rise to the level of significant oversight of fiduciary responsibility.

In short, we forgot. We forgot about God. Our memory and our perspective became impaired by power, privilege, and prestige.

Sec. 1g. All reports of such audits shall be filed with the bishop not later than 30 days following the date of the audit and no later than September 30 of each year.

Commentary: Diocesan oversight of those audits is too often perfunctory. Audits are meant to be timely and regular, not late and occasional.

Sec. 1h. All buildings and their contents shall be kept adequately insured.

Commentary: It is unfortunate that the canon does not also say: a) policies need to be reviewed regularly; b) every parish needs current inventories and photographs of anything of significant value; c) negligence of facilities and unattended safety concerns may make insurance mute; d) leaving church buildings unlocked may seem like pastoral outreach, but it undermines safety and invites thievery, mischief, and vandalism; e) no insurance policy will pay the whole bill of replacing a burned down church, though church fires have been known to spark a parish revival in a new and improved building.

Sec. 2. The several dioceses shall pass diocesan canons to provide for standard business practices.

Commentary: Every diocese expands on these Episcopal Church canons in its own way. One needs also to study and honor the diocesan canons.

Sec. 3. No vestry, trustee, or other body authorized by civil or canon law to hold, manage, or administer real property for any parish, mission, congregation, or institution, shall encumber or alienate

the same or any part thereof without the written consent of the bishop and standing committee of the diocese, except when the canons of the diocese prescribe other regulations.

Commentary: The sale, mortgage, or long-term lease of parish buildings always requires the consent of the bishop and standing committee, unless diocesan canons provide otherwise. Many observers today believe the wholesale disposition of rectories and the popularity of clergy housing allowances has actually presented ongoing financial challenges for both clergy and congregations, including falling home values, decreased clergy mobility, and expectations that parishes will buy out or buy up clergy homes when they leave a community.

Sec. 4. All real and personal property held by or for the benefit of any parish, mission, or congregation is held in trust for this Church and the diocese thereof in which parish, mission, or congregation is located. This trust shall in no way limit the power of the parish, mission, or congregation as long as it remains a part of this Church and subject to its constitution and canons.

Commentary: This well known part of the canon stipulates that Church, it cannot take its real

if a parish leaves the Episcopal and personal property with it. The property will continue to be held by the diocese.

Congregational governance, by design, is structured to allow for new leaders, bringing new perspectives to the vestry. There is also a responsibility to provide appropriate training for our leaders to equip them to effectively carry out their responsibilities. The availability resources such as manuals for the business operations of the church, diocesan training programs for parish treasurers, diocesan based financial support services, policies and procedures for audit committees, and similar initiatives have already made a positive difference. But the continuing appropriate oversight of the church's financial affairs is crucial to setting all of us free to live out our Baptismal Covenant and to carry on with the mission and ministry of the Episcopal Church in the 21st century.

The Rev. William A. Doubleday spent 25 years as a professor of Pastoral Theology at The General Theological Seminary (1986-2005) and at Bexley Hall (2005-2011) where he taught courses in congregational leadership and in Canon. He is now retired.

Resources

- Canon 7: Of Business Methods in Church Affairs http://www.episcopalarchives.org/e-archives/canons/CandC_FINAL_11.29.2006.pdf
- Manual of Business Methods in Church <http://www.ecfvp.org/tools/manual-of-business-methods-in-church-affairs/>
- Taking Care of Business <http://www.ecfvp.org/posts/taking-care-of-business/>
- The Vestry Resource Guide <http://www.episcopalfoundation.org/tools-and-programs/leadership-tools/the-vestry-resource-guide>

Connecting the Dots

BY BONNIE ANDERSON

Since the first colony in Jamestown, there have been Anglicans in what is now the United States. As the Revolutionary War was ending in 1782, a 34-year-old Philadelphia priest named William White, proposed a form of government for The Episcopal Church that was as revolutionary as the United States itself.

In his pamphlet entitled, “The Case of the Episcopal Church in the United States Considered” William White had the audacious and visionary courage to propose an unheard of and revolutionary process for selecting bishops. White proposed that each state (now dioceses) select their own bishop and the bishop be selected by ballots cast by clergy and laity. In addition, a convention, attended by clergy and lay people from each state, would be asked to ratify a constitution that would join and bind all the separate states into the one Episcopal Church.

Today, lay people, clergy, and bishops make all major decisions affecting the life of the Episcopal Church jointly. Vestries are elected by parishes and along with the rector, govern the work and ministry

of the congregations. The congregation, composed primarily of lay people, calls the rector. Parishes elect lay people to be delegates to diocesan conventions where they vote, along with the diocese’s clergy and bishop(s) on major policy decisions, budget and often make statements about issues in the church and civil society. Each of the 109 dioceses in the Episcopal Church has an annual convention, in some dioceses called the “annual diocesan council.” It is only there, where the voices of the laity and clergy are present, that changes to the diocesan constitution can be made.

The laity and clergy of the diocese where he/she will serve elect Bishops. A search committee composed of diocesan clergy and laity seek nominations from the bishops, clergy, and laity in the larger church, hold open meetings where the nominees are met by lay and clergy members of the diocese and each congregation is equally represented at the electing convention by clergy and laity.

Our revolutionary form of governance does not stop on the parish, mission, or diocesan level. Once

every three years the Episcopal Church gathers together in a General Convention, which, as a “unitary” form of governance, holds all authority for the Episcopal Church. Laity, clergy and bishops each have had equal voice and vote since the first General Convention in 1785.

Dr. Pamela Chinnis, 29th president of the House of Deputies, summarized the authority of General Convention in this way:

“General Convention has the authority to change the documents that define us as Episcopalians: the constitution and canons and the Book of Common Prayer, along with its accompanying Hymnal and supplemental music and worship texts.

It must also authorize use of national resources and staff who coordinate various missionary, educational and social-justice ministries and adopt a budget to support them.Historically, the convention has also considered resolutions addressing a broad range of ecclesiastical and social policy issues.”

(Chinnis, Pamela. *Decently and in Order*. Forward Movement 2000.)

The 77th General Convention, to be held July 2012, will convene in Indianapolis, Indiana. Each diocese may send four clergy and four lay deputies to General Convention who are seated with voice and vote in the House of Deputies. An Official Youth Presence composed of two high school age young people from each of the nine provinces of the Episcopal Church are also seated in the House of Deputies. All bishops may to attend General Convention and be seated with voice and vote in the House of Bishops. Although the two houses meet separately, all resolutions considered, in order to become concurred must be adopted in exactly the same language by each House.

Worship, fellowship events, open hearings, and regular prayer, provide the opportunity to bring the gathering of clergy, laity, and bishops together in unexpected and blessed ways.

In between the three years when General Convention meets, Executive Council, an elected body, oversees the governance of the larger Church. Executive Council is composed of 40 members; 20 are elected by General

Convention (four bishops, four priests or deacons, 12 lay people); and eighteen people are elected from the provinces (one clergy and one lay person from each of the nine provinces).

Even though the House of Bishops meets twice per year between General Conventions, their agenda is limited by the Constitution and Canons of The Episcopal Church, which are set by General Convention. When the House of Bishops is not in session at General Convention but meets between General Conventions it cannot initiate or amend the programs, budget, or Constitution and Canons of the Church as adopted by General Convention. It does have some responsibilities for the discipline of bishops and it sometimes issues statements on matters affecting the general state of the church or in response to the needs of contemporary society. Pastoral letters may also be issued.

In summary, if you are an Episcopalian, you may have thought that the Episcopal Church is unique. As you can see from your own experience and from the various examples above, we govern ourselves. In decisions that are made about our life together as a Christian community, there is

no decision making from on high. There is no group with more authority than another. The voices of all the baptized are valued. This value is reflected in everything we do, from how we make decisions, to how we worship and pray. Our governance really is a kind of applied ecclesiology. Our governance is theological in nature as it encourages and enables us to be in community enriched by the great diversity that God has given us. We are encouraged to use the gifts that God has given us; we grow in Christ by what we learn from each other. We look for the face of Jesus among and within us and beyond ourselves as we practice our baptismal promise to “love our neighbor as ourselves, respecting the dignity of every human being”.

Thank you, William White for being a courageous revolutionary. The holy people of God are still enjoying your courageous acts.

Bonnie Anderson, *President of the Episcopal Church's House of Deputies*, is an advocate for the ministry of the laity. In the tradition of the great lay educator Verna Dozier, who called the laity “the sleeping giant,” Anderson often reminds the church that

“there are 2 million ministers in the Episcopal Church and many are still waiting to use their gifts actively to help bring about the Kingdom of God. Let’s get going.”

Resources

- “The Case of the Episcopal Church in the United States Considered” by William White: <http://anglicanhistory.org/usa/wwhite/case1782.html>
- General Convention: <http://www.generalconvention.org/>
- Executive Council: <http://www.generalconvention.org/ec>
- William White: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_White_\(Bishop_of_Pennsylvania\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_White_(Bishop_of_Pennsylvania))

Our Call to Leadership

BY LELANDA LEE

I believe that People of Color have a special call to leadership in the church today in the United States. Although People of Color, particularly Latinos/Hispanics, are the fastest growing segment of the overall U.S. population, we are vastly under-represented in the pews of the Episcopal churches located within the U.S. and even more so in the ascending leadership ranks, especially at the diocesan, provincial, and church wide levels. There are some churches that are predominantly “historically African-American” or “Sudanese” or “Hmong” or “Hispanic” or located on Native American reservations, but the fact is that many dioceses struggle to incorporate non-Anglos in congregations that worship in areas where non-Anglos comprise rising percentages of the local demographics.

If one can generalize, People of Color tend to fall into two categories. There are those like me, descended from immigrant parents, but not myself an immigrant, having been born and raised in New York City and Detroit, Michigan. Then there are those like my two aunts, both near my age, who as teens did emigrate

from China by way of Hong Kong. Latinos/Hispanics experience similar patterns, a community will often include a mixture of direct immigrants and those who are descendants of immigrants and as Americanized as I am.

Our patterns of church membership are as varied as we are. Our parents, whose first languages are the languages of their childhoods and their countries of origin, are often more comfortable worshipping with people who share their cultural heritage and language. In worship, they can relax and allow the liturgy and the words of the prayers to transport them without the added strain of translating and finding the correct vocabulary of responses.

However, for many of their American born descendants, English suits us better; we want to fit in if we can find a congregational home that is not merely ‘welcoming,’ but actually warm and affirmatively inviting. You see this is where the differences are found. Although we are American, we are also culturally foreign in the sense that we have been formed in the language of our parents and grand-

parents, and we are enculturated in our ancestors’ culture and values.

I recently participated in a consultation on Alternative Leadership and Theological Training in Oklahoma with both lay and clergy leaders representing the four major ethnic ministry groupings in The Episcopal Church, namely the Asiamerican, the Black (African American, African Caribbean, and African), the Latino/Hispanic, and the Indigenous (including Alaskan and Hawaiian) in January of this year. What was surprising to many of us was to learn of a number of similarities in our nondominant culturally shaped experiences. Obviously, it would be inaccurate to extrapolate and claim statements of fact based on anecdotal stories from some forty or so people; yet, those of us gathered were struck by the presence of many shared culturally-based and inculcated values.

For example, we discovered a reticence to step forward and claim our place in the forefront, even when we clearly possess the gifts and charisma of leadership, often hanging back, waiting to receive

an affirmative invitation. If you surmise that our reticence is based on lack of self-confidence or courage, you would be wrong. Rather, our reticence is grounded in a value of honoring the opinion and judgment of elders and those in leadership positions, and honoring those individual leaders, and thus, affording them the space to issue invitations to us to step forward. We want to be asked, we want to step forward, we want to offer ourselves and our gifts for the greater good, and yet, our cultural values require us to wait to be invited. For many of us People of Color, this ethic can be as strong a moral imperative as the commandments not to steal or to bear false witness.

Another example is interrupting or cutting off someone else who is speaking, especially an elder or acknowledged leader, even if they are factually wrong in what they are saying. We do notice errors of fact, but we acknowledge a greater value of “saving face” and allowing the elder or leader the opportunity to self-correct. If we do speak up, it is likely to ask a clarifying question in a form that presumes I might be mistaken in my assumptions. So, a question will take the form of “Am I mistaken in my assumption of . . . ?” as compared to a question that challenges, such

as, “Don’t you mean . . . ?” The former presumes my potential for being wrong, while the latter presumes that you are wrong. There is an inherent posture of humility in the way that many People of Color live into the fourth commandment of honoring our fathers and our mothers.

In some cultures, such as in Native American tribes, answers are sometimes given in the form of telling a story that establishes our relationship, not only with each other who is present, but also with those from whom the answer derives, before actually giving the answer. For many People of Color, relationships are primary, and transmittal of information secondary, which can be very frustrating for goal- and task-oriented people and those working with deadlines, leading to misunderstanding. Thus, a conversation or meeting can be quite lengthy and involved if conducted in a culturally sensitive manner to accommodate certain People of Color. In contrast, if that same conversation or meeting were held strictly according to dominant cultural norms in the U.S., it could feel very disrespectful, manipulative, and rushed to someone from a non-Anglo culture.

I agree with critics who say that some accommodation must be

made by People of Color to learn to assimilate into the Anglo dominant culture’s methods of communication, and I would say, likewise, members of the dominant culture and especially those who hold leadership positions must also learn to accommodate the diverse patterns of communication found among the various communities of color living in the United States. The accommodation must run in both directions out of a Christian sense of love for the other that does not judge or presume superiority or inferiority and that does not value efficiency over relationships. I find it ironic that we in The Episcopal Church, whose own Book of Common Prayer states that the Church’s mission is to restore ourselves to God and to each other in God through Jesus Christ, behave in terms of mission and ministry as if the dominant Anglo culture is the only correct one to engage.

Currently, Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) is a popular methodology of approaching underserved and underrepresented communities. A key tenet of ABCD is to identify and utilize more fully the gifts and charisms of the people living within those communities, which are primarily communities of color. The focus on strengths within those communities is to

be lauded. However, I would caution my Anglo brothers and sisters against the tendency to frame those strengths and gifts in terms that speak to strengths and gifts found more prevalently in the dominant Anglo culture than in communities of color.

Ultimately, the responsibility to know one's own biases or lenses, including acknowledgement that such biases and lenses exist, is of paramount importance and falls upon the shoulders of the dominant culture. The almost constant burden to "translate" our (People of Color's) cultural differences into forms that are readily understood by the dominant culture is what causes the eye rolling you might sometimes catch us doing. It is a tremendous burden always to be the teachers, especially when we often perceive a willfulness not even to try to learn.

My observation for my brothers and sisters of color is that our unique call as Persons of Color is to keep on showing up and doing the translating in the same way that the unique call of Christians is to keep on showing up and doing the translating of the values of following the Christ versus following money and power. And, I would add for my sisters and brothers of color, do step up at the smallest hint of an invitation, even the unspoken invitations, and take

your place in the councils of the church, because you have something valuable to add to the realization of the reign of God today. It is the poor, the meek, those at the margins, who have the gifts to bless the dominant system.

Lelanda Lee is a member of Executive Council. Find her blog "What a cup of tea" here: <http://whatacupoftea.blogspot.com/>

Resources

- Consultation on Alternative Leadership and Theological Training <http://episcopaldigitalnetwork.com/ens/2012/01/17/leaders-meet-to-consult-on-episcopal-churchs-ethnic-ministries/>
- Asiamerican Ministries: <http://www.episcopalchurch.org/page/asiamerica-ministries>
- Black Ministries: <http://www.episcopalchurch.org/black>
- Indigenous Ministries: <http://www.episcopalchurch.org/page/indigenous-ministries>
- Latino/Hispanic Ministries: <http://www.episcopalchurch.org/latino>
- Asset Based Community Development: <http://www.ecfvp.org/vestrypapers/real-basics-for-vestries/lessons-from-babylon/>

Nuestra Llamada al Liderazgo

POR LELANDA LEE

Creo que la Gente de Color tiene un cometido especial hacia el liderazgo en la iglesia estadounidense contemporánea. Si bien la Gente de Color, especialmente los hispanos, somos el segmento de mayor crecimiento de la población general de EE UU, estamos muy pobremente representados en los bancos de las iglesias episcopales de Estados Unidos y mucho más aún en los rangos ascendentes del liderazgo, especialmente a los niveles diocesano, provincial y de la iglesia en general. Hay algunas iglesias que son predominantemente “históricamente afroamericanas” o “sudanesas” o “hmong” o “hispanas” o están situadas en las reservaciones de nativos americanos, pero el hecho es que muchas diócesis luchan por incorporar a no anglos a feligresías que rinden culto en partes en que los no anglos son un alto y creciente porcentaje de la demografía local.

Si se puede generalizar, la Gente de Color tiende a caer en dos categorías. Están aquellos que como yo descienden de padres inmigrantes, pero que ellos mismos no son inmigrantes porque nacieron y se criaron en la Ciudad de Nueva York y en Detroit, Michigan. Después están

aquellos como mis dos tías, ambas de aproximadamente mi misma edad, que emigraron de China en la adolescencia vía Hong Kong. Los hispanos tienen patrones similares, una comunidad que a menudo incluye una mezcla de inmigrantes directos y de descendientes de inmigrantes tan americanizados como lo soy yo.

Nuestros patrones de afiliación a iglesias son tan variados como nosotros. Nuestros padres, cuyos primeros idiomas son los idiomas de sus niñeces y de sus países de origen, a menudo se sienten más cómodos rindiendo culto con gente que comparte su idioma y herencia cultura. En el culto se pueden relajar y permitir que la liturgia y las oraciones los transporten sin el esfuerzo adicional de traducir y encontrar el vocabulario correcto de respuestas.

Sin embargo, a muchos de sus descendientes nacidos en Estados Unidos nos resulta más cómodo el inglés; queremos ser parte del grupo si podemos encontrar una feligresía que no sólo nos ‘da la bienvenida’, sino que también es cálida y nos invita afirmativamente. Es ahí donde se encuen-

tran las diferencias. Si bien somos estadounidenses, también somos culturalmente extranjeros en el sentido de que nos formamos en el idioma de nuestros padres y abuelos y que nos impartieron la cultura y los valores de nuestros antepasados.

Recientemente, en enero de este año, participé en una consulta sobre Liderazgo Alternativo y Capacitación Teológica (Alternative Leadership and Theological Training) (<http://episcopaldigitalnetwork.com/ens/2012/01/17/leaders-meet-to-consult-on-episcopal-churches-ethnic-ministries/>) en Oklahoma a la que asistieron líderes laicos y del clero que representaban principalmente a los cuatro principales agrupamientos étnicos de ministerios en la Iglesia Episcopal: el asiático-americano, el negro (afroamericano, afrocaribeño y africano), el latino/hispano y el indígena (incluyendo los nativos de Alaska y Hawái). Lo que fue sorprendente para muchos de nosotros fue encontrar un número de similitudes en nuestras experiencias moldeadas por la cultura no dominante. Evidentemente, sería impreciso extrapolar y alegar hechos basados en historias

anecdóticas de unas cuarenta personas pero, sin embargo, a los que estuvimos ahí reunidos nos impresionó la presencia de muchos valores compartidos enraizados en culturas e inculcados.

Por ejemplo, descubrimos una reticencia a reclamar nuestro lugar al frente, especialmente cuando claramente poseemos los dones y el carisma del liderazgo, a menudo quedándonos en la retaguardia, esperando recibir una invitación afirmativa. Si usted supusiera que nuestra reticencia surge de una falta de confianza en nosotros mismos o de valentía, estaría equivocado. En lugar de ello, nuestra reticencia emana de la noción de honrar la opinión y el criterio de los mayores y de los que ocupan puestos de liderazgo y, por lo tanto, deseamos darles el espacio necesario para que nos inviten a dar ese paso adelante. Queremos que nos lo pidan, queremos avanzar, queremos ofrecernos y ofrecer nuestros dones para el mayor bien, pero nuestros valores culturales requieren que esperemos a que nos inviten. Para muchos de nosotros, la Gente de Color, esta ética puede ser tan fuerte como el imperativo moral de los mandamientos de no mentir o de no rendir falsos testimonios.

Otro ejemplo es interrumpir o

cortar a alguien que esté hablando, especialmente una persona mayor o un líder, incluso si sus datos están errados. No señalamos errores de hechos, pero sí aceptamos el mayor valor de “salvar las apariencias” y permitir que la persona mayor o el líder se corrijan a sí mismos. Si decimos algo, probablemente será hacer una pregunta aclaratoria de manera tal que haga suponer que nosotros estamos equivocados en nuestras suposiciones. Así que una pregunta podrá ser, por ejemplo, “¿Estoy errado al suponer...?”, en lugar de una pregunta retadora como “¿Acaso no quiere decir...?” La primera supone que yo puedo estar equivocado, mientras que la segunda supone que el que está equivocado es usted. Hay una postura inherente de humildad en la manera en que la Gente de Color vive el cuarto mandamiento de honrar a nuestros padres y madres.

En algunas culturas, como las de las tribus de nativos americanos, las respuestas a veces se dan en la forma de narrar una historia que establece nuestra relación no sólo entre los presentes, sino con aquellos de los que deriva la respuesta. Para mucha Gente de Color las relaciones son primarias y la transmisión de información secundaria, algo que puede ser muy frustrante para

la gente orientada hacia metas y tareas y para los que trabajan con fechas rígidas, con los consiguientes malos entendidos. Por lo tanto, una conversación o una reunión pueden ser prolongadas si se realizan de una manera culturalmente sensible hacia cierta Gente de Color. A diferencia de ello, si esa misma conversación o reunión tuvieran lugar estrictamente según las normas dominantes en Estados Unidos, los de una cultura no anglo sentirían que es muy irrespetuosa, manipulativa y apresurada.

Estoy de acuerdo con los críticos que dicen que la Gente de Color debe realizar algunos ajustes para aprender a asimilarse a los métodos de comunicación de la cultura anglo dominante y diría, asimismo, que los miembros de la cultura dominante -- y especialmente los que ocupan puestos de liderazgo -- también deben aprender a adaptarse a los patrones de comunicación de las diversas comunidades de color que viven en Estados Unidos. La adaptación debe ser en ambas direcciones por un sentido de amor cristiano por el prójimo que no juzga ni presume superioridad o inferioridad y que no valora más la eficiencia que las relaciones. Me parece irónico que en la Iglesia Episcopal, cuyo propio *Libro de Oración Común* dice que la misión de la Iglesia

Episcopal, cuyo propio Libro de Oración Común dice que la misión de la Iglesia es restituírnos a Dios y entre nosotros en Dios mediante Cristo, nos comportemos hacia la misión y el ministerio como si la cultura anglo dominante fuera la única correcta que seguir.

En la actualidad, el Desarrollo Comunitario Basado en Activos (Asset Based Community Development, ABCD) es una metodología popular de acercarse a las comunidades insuficientemente atendidas y representadas. Uno de los principios fundamentales del ABCD es identificar y utilizar más plenamente los dones y carismas de la gente que vive en esas comunidades, que son principalmente comunidades de color. La concentración en los puntos fuertes de esas comunidades es digna de encomio. Sin embargo, debo advertirles a mis hermanos y hermanas anglo que resistan la tendencia a enmarcar esos puntos fuertes y dones en términos que se refieran a los puntos fuertes y dones más prevalentes en la cultura anglo que en las comunidades de color.

Finalmente, la responsabilidad de conocer nuestros propios sesgos y lentes, incluyendo admitir que esos sesgos y lentes existen, es de suma importancia y cae en los hombros de la cultura domi-

nante. La carga casi constante de “traducir” nuestras (las de la Gente de Color) diferencias culturales en formas que la cultura dominante pueda entender fácilmente es lo que causa que tengamos el gesto de resignación que a veces se ve en nuestros rostros. Es una carga muy pesada tener que ser siempre los maestros, especialmente cuando a menudo percibimos que nuestros alumnos ni siquiera están tratando de aprender.

Mi observación para mis hermanos y hermanas de color es que nuestro cometido único como Personas de Color es seguir presentándonos y traduciendo de la misma manera en que el llamado especial de los cristianos es seguir presentándose y traduciendo los valores de seguir a Cristo en lugar de seguir el dinero y el poder. Y, añadiría para mis hermanos y hermanas de color, que sí den ese paso adelante ante el menor indicio de invitación, incluso de invitaciones no expresadas con palabras, y que ocupen sus puestos en los consejos de la iglesia, porque ustedes tienen algo valioso que añadir a la realización del reino de Dios en el presente. Son los pobres, los mansos, los marginados los que tienen los dones de bendecir el régimen dominante.

Lelanda Lee es miembro del Consejo Ejecutivo. Encuentre su

blog “What a cup of tea” aquí:
<http://whatacupoftea.blogspot.com/>

Resources

- Consulta sobre Liderazgo Alternativo y Capacitación Teológica <http://episcopaldigitalnetwork.com/ens/2012/01/17/leaders-meet-to-consult-on-episcopal-churchs-ethnic-ministries/>
- Ministerios asiático-americanos: <http://www.episcopalchurch.org/page/asiame-ministries>
- Ministerios negros: <http://www.episcopalchurch.org/black>
- Ministerios Indígenas: <http://www.episcopalchurch.org/page/indigenous-ministries>
- Ministerios Latinos/Hispanos: <http://www.episcopalchurch.org/latino>
- Desarrollo Comunitario Basado en Activos: <http://www.ecfvp.org/vestrypapers/real-basics-for-vestries/lessons-from-babylon/>

Episcopal and Baptist Governance

BY DAVID PERKINS

As a priest engaged in intentional interim ministry, I maintain a home in rural east Georgia near Augusta. A few days before receiving the invitation to write this article, I was at home unpacking a box of pictures and came across my Baptist local license and ordination certificate, documents that became relics when I joined the Episcopal Church.

As a high school junior, I announced to Trinity Baptist Church in Oakdale, Louisiana that God had called me into ministry. After having heard me preach a few times, they voted in business conference to issue me a “local license,” commending me to other churches as one called to preach. I then began a ministry of supply preaching.

When a college junior, the Longstraw Baptist Church near Ruston, Louisiana called me as their pastor. The congregation heard me preach and called a business meeting in which they voted to call me and to petition my home church to ordain me. In May of that year, College Place Baptist Church, Monroe, Louisiana voted in a congregational meeting to ordain me.

The night before, seven Baptist ministers, who had been convened as an ordination council by my pastor, The Rev. T. Earl Ogg, questioned me about my theology, my vision of ministry, and my understanding of the Baptist faith. They voted to recommend to the congregation that I be ordained. The ordination certificate, signed by those seven Baptist clergy, reads:

We, the undersigned, hereby certify that upon the recommendation and request of the Longstraw Baptist Church at Choudrant, Louisiana, which had full and sufficient opportunity for judging of his gifts, and after satisfactory examination by us in regard to his Christian experience, call to the ministry, and views of Bible Doctrine, David Wm Perkins was solemnly and publicly set apart and ordained to the work of The Gospel Ministry by authority and order of the College Place Baptist Church at Monroe, Louisiana, on the 9th. Day of May 1965.

But that was a long time ago.

In 1995, after years of service as a Baptist minister and seminary teacher, I became an Episcopal layperson with no intentions

regarding priesthood. The next year, my bishop, the late Right Rev. Robert Hargrove, enlisted my assistance as lay reader in charge of a mission parish. Shortly thereafter I entered the discernment process and, after a period of discernment and preparation, I was ordained as an Episcopal deacon at St. Thomas Episcopal Church in Monroe, Louisiana, my home parish. Seven months later, I was ordained a priest in the mission parish I served as deacon in charge, The Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd in Vidalia, Louisiana. My ordination certificate was signed by Bishop Hargrove and reflects our hierarchical polity and our commitment to the episcopate as the ordaining authority.

These two experiences highlight the distinct differences between Baptist and Episcopal governance. First, the Baptist congregation that called me and the one that ordained me were functioning independently of any overseeing structure. The decision to ordain was made by the congregation in a business session. No denominational official was consulted, no discernment process took place

outside the ordination council, and only the local congregation's authority was required.

By comparison, Bishop Hargrove appointed a discernment committee in my home parish. I became a postulant only after their work with me and a vote of the Standing Committee of the Diocese of Western Louisiana. A period of discernment followed that included a thorough background check and a battery of psychological tests, along with a psychological interview. Only after those processes unfolded and after being mentored by three senior clergy of the diocese did the Standing Committee, upon the recommendation of Bishop Hargrove, advance me to candidacy. I was ordained in May of 1998 at Good Shepherd, Vidalia. The ordination required that a bishop officiate and only the bishop's signature was required on my ordination certificate.

In the Baptist understanding, the local congregation is the basic unit of the church. The church functions independently of any overseeing structures and actually does not "belong" to the larger denomination. The church voluntarily associates with other local Baptist churches, with the state Baptist convention, and with the national Baptist body

and can associate with any or all of them in any order. There is no hierarchy and the church holds title to its property. The church gives money voluntarily to Baptist causes and sends messengers to local associational, state, and national gatherings. Those bodies exercise no authority over the local congregation, which calls its own clergy, determines its own theological orientation, and sets up its own unique internal governance.

In the Episcopal understanding, the basic unit of the church is the diocese and the bishop serves as chief pastor of each church. The parish holds the property in trust for the diocese and is bound by the rubrics of The Book of Common Prayer and the canons of the diocese and the Episcopal Church. The bishop has appointive power to determine the clergy leadership of a mission. The bishop also must interview and approve the calling of the clergy of a parish. The bishop has the authority, in consultation with the Standing Committee of a diocese, to ordain and to discipline clergy whose behavior violates their ordination vows, the canons, or basic Christian moral and ethical principles.

My experience of Episcopal governance at the parish and diocesan levels has been far less

anxious and chaotic than was my experience as a Baptist. The episcopate reinforces the unity of the church. The rubrics and the canons provide guidance for the worship and mission of the parish. Episcopal pastoral oversight of clergy and parishes provides guidance and security lacking in congregational polity. Episcopal governance was one of the key factors that drew me into this church; it has provided me with structure – and support – that continues to sustain my ministry.

David Perkins is an Episcopal priest engaged in intentional interim ministry. Each weekday he writes a devotional based on one of the Daily Office Lectionary readings in the Episcopal Book of Common Prayer. They are posted at: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/episcopaloffice/>. At the time this article was written, he was interim rector at The Episcopal Church of the Holy Comforter in Montgomery, Alabama.

Resources

- William H. Brackney, "Congregationalism." Baptist Historical and Heritage Society and the William H. Whitsitt Baptist Heritage Society." <http://www.baptisthistory.org/pamphlets/congregationalism.htm>

- Robert F. Capon, *The Astonished Heart* (Eerdmans, 1996), especially his treatment of left-handed vs. right-handed power on pp. 62-72. ■ Black Ministries: <http://www.episcopalchurch.org/black>
- Robert Pritchard, *A History of the Episcopal Church* (Morehouse, 1999), especially pp. 74-98 on the history of the organization of The Episcopal Church.
- Miraslov Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Eerdmans, 1997). Volf seeks to create a theological foundation for congregational governance.

Called to Common Mission

BY MARY FRANCES SCHJONBERG (ABRIDGED BY NANCY DAVIDGE)

Twenty-five years ago, two churches – one Episcopal, the other Lutheran – came together united by a common mission. Members include:

- Hal Vatland who found Lamb of God Lutheran Episcopal Church as he drove around southern Lee County, Florida, looking for a new congregation to join.
- Bill Monsees who first found Lamb of God when its members were worshipping in rented space in a strip mall next door to a motorcycle shop. Today, he is president of the church's governing board which combines the Lutheran council and the Episcopal vestry.
- Jacke McCurdy who learned about the congregation from a friend about two years ago. "I said 'I have been looking for that church,'" she said. "I went the next day and I never left."
- Jacqueline Means, the first regularly ordained woman in the Episcopal Church, who worships at Lamb of God because "I need to get out of the sense of tradition being all we're here

for."

They're all members of a faith community that Senior Pastor Walter Fohs, a Lutheran, says has been breaking new ground and evolving since long before its Lutheran and Episcopal members officially joined together in 2004.

Indeed, change is a weekly event at Lamb of God. By weekday the congregation's building, known as the Vineyard, is a preschool for 190 children. After they leave on Friday afternoon, their equipment gets wheeled to the sides behind screens and the Vineyard becomes the site of the congregation's 10:00 am main worship service, known as the Catch the Spirit service.

Fohs presides at that service in street clothes and preaches from a stool. The liturgy and announcements are projected on two large video screens above the dais that serves as the sanctuary. Lay people stand in a circle behind him during the Eucharistic prayer and they prepare the chalices and paten for communion. Lay people administer both bread and wine.

Vested in more traditional garb, Fohs presides at the 7:45 am service in the Arbor, the church's smaller worship space. That service is based on Rite Two in the Book of Common Prayer.

While Fohs is the driving force behind much of the change and Lamb of God's orientation towards service to the community beyond its doors, it hasn't been just Fohs alone.

President of Lamb of God's Governing Board Bill Monsees said, "We have amazing lay ministry in this church. Walter has helped us grow and opened our eyes [to ministry possibilities] but it's the people who do it."

The congregation's 2012 Ministry Opportunities catalogue lists 12 outreach ministries, 20 ways to minister within the congregation, and nine education and hospitality opportunities open to both Lamb of God members and people in the wider community.

A parishioner who is in the day care business started the preschool that occupies a large part of Lamb of God's buildings during

the week. It is run independently and pays the church for the use of the space. The school has given Lamb of God “a reputation for a place that cares about kids.”

The idea for what became Lamb of God Lutheran Episcopal Church grew out of a friendship that formed between Fohs, who began his ministry with the Lutheran Lamb of God congregation in the mid-1990s, and the Very Rev. John Adler, who was then serving as interim vicar at nearby St. Joseph’s Episcopal Church.

St. John’s and Lamb of God Lutheran were at the time in locations that Fohs recalled were “abysmal.” Lamb of God worshipped in a former retail store it owned next to a Burger King in a bend of the northbound side of U.S. 41, also known as Tamiami Trail, a busy commercial road. Meanwhile, St. Joseph’s was at the end of a dead-end road off the southbound side of Tamiami.

Fohs convinced the Lutheran congregation to sell the property and build the first of its two buildings on what was then the growing southern end of Lee County. Lamb of God moved to the rented space in which Monsees first found the congregation and the Lutherans dedicated “The Arbor” in the early

fall of 2000.

Meanwhile, St. Joseph’s had been struggling because of conflicts with two previous priests and Fohs said Adler helped the Episcopalians consider their options. They included disbanding and dispersing to one or more other local Episcopal churches or “close your door and because of the agreement, walk down the street and become a part of Lamb of God.”

“They were not too awfully excited about that right away because they were a pretty tight-knit group,” Fohs said.

But on Dec. 31, the last Sunday of 2000, the St. Joseph’s congregation had its final Eucharist at their church and then drove over to Lamb of God, led by the procession cross sticking up through the sunroof of one member’s car.

As they drove up Cypress View Drive to the church, “we made a double line with all of our folks holding flowers and we welcomed them into this building” where the two congregations celebrated Eucharist again, Fohs recalled.

Early the next year the Episcopal Church and Evangelical Lutheran Church in America entered into a full-communion relationship

(known as Called to Common Mission) that opened a door to new possibilities for shared ministry among congregations in each denomination. However, St. Joseph’s and Lamb of God were not formally joined at that point.

Eventually in 2004, the two congregations made it official, becoming a so-called “federated congregation” in which both congregations became members of a new non-profit organization that is subject to the governing provisions of both denominations. It reports to both the ELCA’s Florida-Bahamas Synod and the Episcopal Diocese of Southwest Florida.

At the time of the agreement, three-quarters of the congregation was Lutheran and a quarter Episcopalian, according to the agreement. However, since then the agreement calls for “no distinction in congregational membership based on previous denominational affiliation.”

Monsees, a Lutheran when he joined Lamb of God, said denominational identity is indeed not a question, and Fohs agreed. “We have a non-denominational church here,” he said. “Now, I don’t think that’s a bad thing.”

Fohs says “it’s been nothing but growth” in the years since the

two congregations merged. These days between 300 and 400 people attend Sunday services in season and 130-160 during the summer months when the area's "snowbirds" have gone back to their northern homes.

Called to Common Mission gave the two congregations the "impetus, opportunity and permission" to consider how they might combine forces for ministry, Fohs said. Without what he called the "nationally recognized permission," Fohs said, "there would not have been the motivation" to do so.

Jon A. Perez, who leads Epiphany Lutheran & Episcopal Church in Marina, California, and is a member of the Lutheran Episcopal Coordinating Committee, calls Lamb of God a "best-case scenario" and "an example of what can be achieved" under the full-communion agreement. By contrast, Perez said his congregation was closer to the worst-case scenario, having developed after a nearby Episcopal parish was dying and down to "the last five survivors" who "did not want to be a joint ministry."

Even with the full-communion agreement, no more than 50 Episcopal and Lutheran congregations, plus some joint campus ministries, have united under its

terms, according to Perez, who maintains a list of those congregations.

Perez cautioned that, too often, it is only congregations facing what he called "failure" that are considered ripe for such combinations. Instead, he suggested, congregations should focus on their assets and what could be achieved by coming together. "People want to see the church working on healing and being one," he said.

Mary Frances Schjonberg is an Episcopal priest and is an editor/reporter for the *Episcopal News Service*.

Resources

- Anniversary of Episcopal-ELCA Agreement: http://archive.episcopalchurch.org/79425_126441_ENG_HTML.htm
- Called to Common Mission: <http://www.elca.org/Who-We-Are/Our-Three-Expressions/Churchwide-Organization/Office-of-the-Presiding-Bishop/Ecumenical-and-Inter-Religious-Relations/Full-Communion-Partners/The-Episcopal-Church/Called-to-Common-Mission/Official-Text.aspx>

- Frequently Asked Questions: <http://www.elca.org/Who-We-Are/Our-Three-Expressions/Churchwide-Organization/Office-of-the-Presiding-Bishop/Ecumenical-and-Inter-Religious-Relations/Full-Communion-Partners/The-Episcopal-Church/Called-to-Common-Mission/FAQ-Called-to-Common-Mission.aspxwww.episcopalchurch.org/black>

- Joint Lutheran and Episcopal Congregations: <http://epiphanymarina.org/> and click on Call to Com. Mission in left menu bar.

- Lamb of God Lutheran Episcopal Church: <http://www.lambofgodchurch.net/>

- Lamb of God Outreach Ministries: http://www.lambofgodchurch.net/Outreach_Ministries.html

- Lutheran Episcopal Coordinating Committee: <http://archive.elca.org/ecumenical/fullcommunion/episcopal/lecc/index.html>