



The  
Episcopal Diocese  
of New York

Report of  
The Rt. Rev. Mary D. Glasspool, Bishop Assistant  
to the  
240th Convention of The Episcopal Diocese of New York  
Friday, November 4, 2016

It is such an honor to have the opportunity to serve with you in this wonderfully complex Diocese of New York! Thank you, Bishop Andy, Bishop Allen, and all of you, for welcoming me so warmly into the fold. I'm deeply grateful to God for the unexpected, joy-filled grace of this time, and even as I continue to listen and learn the countless stories that collectively comprise this part of the Body of Christ, I know we will also have some fun together as we continue to engage God's Mission.

It has also been my great good fortune to have arrived in the Diocese of New York in the middle of the working out of a strategic plan for the future. Clearly the focus of this Convention is to affirm the work all of us have done together, and commit ourselves to the next steps in this ongoing journey, the point of which, generally speaking, is to be a more effective *church* for the 21st Century, bearing witness to Christ's love and justice for all, and working to bring forward the Reign of God in a broken and hurting world. Others, particularly our Bishop Diocesan, will have much more to say about these issues. For now, let me say that what has been assigned to me, in addition to the foundation of congregational visitations every week – which I consider the *bread and butter* of life as a bishop – is oversight of those aspects of our Diocesan Life together which encompass *mission*.

During the past seven months I have been introduced to and engaged with the Global Mission Commission, the Global Women's Fund, the Social Concerns Commission, and the Ecumenical and Interfaith Commission. Each of these commissions has subcommittees, and while I haven't yet met with all of these groups of people, I am impressed with how well and extensively this

diocese engages God's Mission. Two weeks ago, the Global Mission Commission sponsored the first annual Global Mission Fair at St. James' Church, Madison Avenue. Anyone who attended this event not only experienced the warm hospitality of one of the congregations of our diocese, but also learned about the changing faces of mission, about sustainability, mutuality, reciprocity, and the challenges of honoring different cultures. The first ever Sustainable Development Goal grants were awarded with \$40,000 given to three different projects each of which demonstrated the sustainability we want to support. The overall goal of our own Diocese, in keeping with the entire Church, is to award .07% of our annual budget to such ministries. It was an inspirational gathering, and I hope you will all keep a lookout for more!

In the meantime, as a relative newcomer with a relatively fresh set of eyes, I want to offer five observations about the strategic plan as it is being lived out in the Diocese of New York. These observations have to do much more with *process* than with *content*, and you may consider them all too obvious, and in some cases, not yet fully realized. But I'm a *process person*: I care about the *ways* in which things are done – and I offer them as words of encouragement along the way.

The first observation is that **Leadership is shared**. Now I don't mean that there isn't a hierarchy in the church that has functioned from time immemorial. Nor do I mean that there shouldn't be. What I *do* mean has to do with good, creative, empowering leadership – that kind of leadership which discerns the gifts and skills of each person and calls them forth in appropriate ways to contribute to and benefit the whole. This isn't always easy for leadership in a hierarchy to do – but I believe it is happening here in the Diocese of New York. Power is being shared. Boundaries are being clarified. A climate in which people feel free to take the initiative is being cultivated. The Bishop's Staff is being reorganized to be more effective resources to the larger diocese. Permission *and* accountability are being given and called for. Collaboration is more important than control. This shared leadership is not a finished product; nor will it ever be. We continue to work with shared leadership so that the human resources that comprise our diocese are maximized, and a comprehensive effort is made to heal the world in God's Name.

The second observation is that **Everyone is included**. I have to say that I was amazed when I first heard that the three task forces working on

*Governance and Diocesan Structures, Congregations, and Financial Matters* – more commonly known as *A, B, and C* – were not only volunteer, but also self-selected! The data collection for the material with which each of these task forces dealt, was so extensive that anyone could contribute by simply attending one of the regional focus group meetings. There were multiple ways in which people can participate in this process, and there still are! I have served in five different dioceses of our church, and I can tell you that there are some dioceses in which the bishop and the bishop alone articulates the vision, and the strategic plan that follows has to do with the rest of the diocese buying into the vision. I'm not saying that's wrong, mind you. I'm just saying that here, in the Diocese of New York, the articulating of a vision is much more of a grass roots process – everyone is included – and even if you have not yet participated, you still can. In fact, you can join this process at any time, because...

My third observation is that **It's a Marathon, not a sprint**. This was actually the advice given to me when I was first consecrated bishop in Los Angeles. In that context, I took it to mean that one doesn't have to accomplish everything in the first week, month, or year. As the people running the New York Marathon will tell you, it is much more important to find a *pace* which can be sustained *over the long haul* than it is to start out at top speed only to fall down, or worse, at mile twenty. In the case of the Strategic Plan we are living into in the Diocese of New York, what we are experiencing now is part of a much longer and larger story. It is most definitely not something in which we engage, report on, package, and then shelve, going back to *business as usual*. This process is part and parcel of our ongoing story, and will result in significant change as we seek to become ever more effective ministers in the world. Again, you will hear more about our *next steps* from Bishop Dietsche.

The fourth observation is that **Economics is relational**. This observation lives in subtlety, so it is best illustrated through a story. It is a story given to me by my friend and colleague, Serena Beeks, who is the Commissioner of Schools in the Diocese of Los Angeles. It goes like this.

In the upper reaches of Saskatchewan, there is a small town, hard hit by tough economic times. One night, a stranger comes into the small hotel. "May I look at your rooms?" he asks the hotel owner. "Here's a deposit to show I am serious." He puts a \$100 bill on the counter. The owner says, "Yes, of course,"

and hands him several keys. The minute the stranger is up the stairs and out of sight, the owner snatches up the \$100 and take it to the butcher shop, where he pays the long overdue meat bill for the hotel's restaurant. The butcher takes the \$100 out to the farmer, who has been providing beef on credit. The farmer takes the \$100 and gives it to the town prostitute, who has been extending credit to him as otherwise there would be no business at all. The town prostitute takes the \$100 and pays for her hotel room. The stranger comes back downstairs. The \$100 is lying on the counter. He picks it up, and says, "Thanks, but I think I won't stay here after all – I want to cover a few more miles tonight." No actual money has been added to the local economy, but everyone feels so much better!

The fifth observation is that in the end, **God is in charge**. Really, God is in charge at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end, although it's hard for us to believe that because we ourselves are so very busy. This observation is more of an admonition to always remember what we are about. Howard Schultz, founder and CEO of *Starbucks Corporation*, the ubiquitous coffee company, published a book in 2011 titled *Onward: How Starbucks Fought for its Life Without Losing its Soul*. In the book, Schultz recounted a low point in the history of the *Starbucks* enterprise in which he walked into a Starbucks store and his senses were practically assaulted with culinary delights and options for drink of almost every kind he could think of. The problem was, he could not smell any coffee, and he realized that somehow, Starbucks had lost its focus, its reason for being. Starbucks was a coffee shop, and he couldn't smell the coffee! Schultz vowed from that point on that he would never again walk into a Starbucks store and not be able to smell the coffee. And Starbucks was reborn.

We are the *Church*, gathered around the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, whom we know as the Christ. For us, God chose to become human in this Jesus, and we take his ongoing mission, his sacrificial death, and his resurrected life to be our own. This is our focus, and our reason for being. We forget that at our own peril.

So, thank you, Diocese of New York, for welcoming this pilgrim into a community where **leadership is shared, everyone's included, it's a marathon not a sprint, economics is relational, and God is in charge**. I look forward to serving

with you, as together we bring forward God's Reign of love and justice in this world.