

**The Bishop's Report
To the 51st Annual Meeting of the Convention
The Episcopal Diocese of Hawai'i**

Introduction

As I begin my report to the Convention, I must thank you again for calling me to be your Bishop. This is my thirteenth report as your Bishop for an Annual Meeting of the Convention. Fifty years ago (1969), we began a common life as the Diocese of Hawai'i. We marked 2019 as the golden anniversary of the Diocese of Hawai'i. It has been a rare honor to be your Bishop as we have celebrated two major milestones: The sesquicentennial of the founding of the Church in Hawai'i (2012) with a visit from the Most Reverend Katharine Jefferts Schori, 26th Presiding Bishop, and this year's 50th anniversary as a Diocese of the Episcopal Church (2019) with a visit from the Most Reverend Michael Bruce Curry, 27th Presiding Bishop.

I.

Our Diocesan motto is "HE LANAKILA MA KE KE'A" (Victory through the Cross). Our Diocesan 'ohana is united by faith in Jesus Christ and that is what we share with the world.

We take seriously our commitment to incorporate "the Native Hawaiian Christian spiritual concepts of mana, malāma and pono into the overall life and work of the Church in all areas of ministry in the Diocese." Ministry here must seek to care for others, creation and all that God has given us (malāma), to live righteously and in respect one for another (pono), and to find the holy (mana) that comes from God in all creation and all of God's children.

It is into such a vision of ministry and mission that we can welcome all of the children of these Islands. Our Diocese must be a model of mālama in which we care one for another, for the hungry and lost of our islands and, especially, for those living all around us who do not know the love of God in Jesus Christ. We need to live these values so that we embody in our own time the courage of the First People of these islands – "Ka lā hiki ola."

We are called to look to "the dawning of a new day." The courage it took to sail into unknown waters guided by the stars, the clouds, the seas and the rising sun lives in us by the gift of the Holy Spirit. We are sailing into new waters, but we are guided by the cross of Christ, we are secure in the love of God through Jesus Christ, we are piloted by the Holy Spirit, and we are assured of the outcome. He lanakila ma ke ke'a. Holo i mua.

In 2017, we affirmed a vision for the Diocese:

OUR VISION

We will be a Diocese that is both *spiritually nourished* and *spiritually engaged*, which will best situate us to be mission-focused, relevant, and viable amid an ever-changing and complex world.

This vision will allow the Diocese to seek out these objectives:

- Nurture our congregations to claim a spiritual identity that is vibrant and engaged. We have to be clear that we are first and foremost followers of Jesus Christ. And that as Episcopalians, our hearts, our minds, and our hands are open.
- Encourage the development of relationships among the members of our congregations - both those new to the church and those who have been around a while - so that we will eagerly share a fresh and energetic faith in Jesus Christ. In other words, we have to learn to better communicate our faith - as individuals, as congregations and as a Diocese.
- Foster a greater sense of ‘ohana within the Diocese, especially among lay and clergy leaders. We are "One Team" working together.
- Encourage a Diocese-wide spiritual awakening that will draw people to the joyful faith presence of Jesus Christ in our churches.
- Invest time, talent, and treasure in the spiritual vitality of our Diocese, which in turn will enhance our human and financial resources for mission.
- Empower our churches to be the Body of Christ in their local communities. Service is a witness to faith.
- Create safe, pastoral environments where individuals can talk openly and share the stories of their spiritual journeys and how they have been transformed by their faith in Jesus Christ.
- Achieve greater clarity in our churches of the importance of compliance with the policies of the Diocese and The ("national") Episcopal Church. [This may sound odd, but it is about how we work together.]

We decided to engage three goals as a Diocese:

OUR GOALS

- The Diocese is committed to developing and sustaining spiritual growth, vitality, curiosity, and well-being within our churches.
- The Diocese seeks to strengthen our identity as one ‘ohana and the relationships within our ‘ohana among clergy, lay leaders, and congregations.
- The Diocese is focused on improving the capacity for communication within our congregations, across the Diocese, and into our communities as we engage in evangelism

II.

Three Design Teams have been working to focus on the goals of the Diocese:.

Goal 1 Team: Spiritual Growth: How do we help our leaders and congregations find their connection with God? This Design Team will identify and design opportunistic activities and programs that will enable significant spiritual growth in the lives of our clergy, lay leaders, and members of the congregations.

Goal 2: ‘Ohana: Building a Community of Faith: How do we increase cooperative efforts among clergy and lay leaders? What leads us to care about each other and work together? This Design Team work will address any operational issues such as clarifying and refining the roles and processes and practices we use to work together, to find ways to make the work both more efficient, and more importantly, more a form of worship in action. How do we invite people to take up key roles and give them the tools they need to be successful? How do we help people overcome their tendency to be separated by geographic, personal, ethnic, and sociological differences?

Goal 3: Communication – the language of Communion: What is our shared identity? What is our unifying Story? This goal grew out of a realization that all the media tools in the world cannot compensate for a lack of common understanding of the meaning of the Story that defines us as Christians and Episcopalians in Hawai‘i. What informs our understanding of God and discipleship? This Design Team will address the language of the Church that explains our relationship with God that establishes the basis of our relationship with each other and the world, and how our Story as Episcopalians can be best shared with the broader community.

In addition, three special Task Groups were formed following the 2018 General Convention:

Worship: This Task Group is to engage “...worshiping communities in experimentation and the creation of alternative texts to offer to the wider church, and that each diocese be urged to create a liturgical commission to collect, reflect, teach and share these resources with the TFLPBR” (Task Force on Liturgical and Prayer Book Revision).

Reconciliation: There were several resolutions and presentations of reconciliation in the broadest terms at General Convention. This Task Group looks to three keys: (a) Racial Reconciliation, (b) Sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment, and (c) The Church’s historic response and/or non-response to such issues.

Creation Care: The Task Group is tasked “to address the scientific, cultural, theological and ethical realities of climate change, and its impact on our Islands and the world.”

An ongoing question for the Diocese has been how to best support ministry for youth (junior and senior high school age). Mr. Darrell Whitaker, Executive Director of Camp Mokule‘ia, and a group of leaders from throughout the Diocese have worked with a consultant, and they have prepared a report. The Diocese will have to evaluate and engage the recommendations in 2020. Further, Diocesan Council is evaluating how grants from the MacCray Fund can encourage ministry with Young Adults (ages 18-30) both on and off college campuses. Their work should be done by the end of 2019.

As we concluded our work in 2017 (Diocesan self study, vision work, and my professional performance review), our consultant, Dr. Kim Payton (an organizational psychologist) told us that the work of the Teams would take three or more years to engage the desired outcomes.

They have begun their work. Please consider their reports as the beginning of our work together. We have just begun.

III.

I shared the outline of our Vision and Goals to bring to mind my ministry in 2019 and looking to 2020. I have added the Diocesan Vision to my daily prayers (and I ask you to do the same): “We will be a Diocese that is both *spiritually nourished* and *spiritually engaged*, which will best situate us to be mission-focused, relevant, and viable amid an ever-changing and complex world.”

My 2017 Professional Performance Review urged me to continue to share my: “commitment, clarity of communication and thought, understanding and ability to teach theology and the academic and Canonical aspects of the Church.” It also urged me to: “Apply [my] strengths as a theologian and teacher to Goal 1 of the strategic plan, focusing on developing the clergy and helping them find ways to be of service to their congregations and community. Adopt a multimedia approach including on-line classes, in-person workshops and especially one-on-one coaching. Focus on the clergy that want the help, and develop a reputation as one who can help clergy find ways to make the Church relevant to their community.”

I have begun that work in 2018. With this, I have also focused on sharing my faith in Jesus Christ. I have been particularly strengthened by March's Renewal 2019 with Presiding Bishop and “RenewalWorks” with the Reverend Jay Sidebotham. Jay will again be with us at this Annual Meeting of Convention. I was delighted that we were able to welcome Ms. Jerusalem Greer, the Episcopal Church’s Staff Officer for Evangelism at the Clergy Retreat in August and Ms. Mary Parmer from “Invite-Welcome-Connect” at a conference in September. We are focusing on the true mission of the Church (Matthew 28:19-20).

We are learning anew that our life is defined by our faith in Jesus Christ. We know the Holy through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Sister Ilia Delio, OSF, [*The Humility of God: A Franciscan Perspective* (St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2005), p. 96] writes:

The power of God is the powerlessness of God’s unconditional love shown to us in the cross. God is the beggar who will not force his way into our homes unless we open the door. God is with us at every moment with open arms of love, laughing when we are laughing, weeping when we are weeping, rejoicing when we are rejoicing. God shares in the brokenness of this world out of abundance of divine love. It is because God is the fountain fullness of love, in Bonaventure’s view, that God can share in the suffering of our lives and through these sufferings draw us into new life. For God’s love cannot be overcome by human power nor can it be conquered by human force. God’s love, shown to us in the weakness and powerlessness of the cross, is the power of love to heal and transform death into life. God is most God-like in the suffering of the cross.

We are learning together that it is only sharing our own stories and inviting others into community that God’s unconditional love can be released into our world. It depends upon each

of us, one person at a time. The ministries of the Design Teams and Task Groups is to help us be better “ambassadors who represent Christ,” but it is still up to each of us in our own daily lives and in our encounters with others hour by hour. My greatest hope for us is that we can truly delight in “Inviting/Welcoming/Connecting” with those who do not know the love of God.

IV.

In March 2016, Presiding Bishop Michael said in an interview (quoted in <https://sojo.net/articles/god-not-finished-world>):

I really believe that the fundamental principle on which Christians stand as followers of Jesus Christ is what Jesus taught and embodied in his life: love God, and love your neighbor. ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself.’ In Matthew’s version Jesus says, ‘On these two hang all the law and the prophets,’ which is basically saying that everything in the religious faith — everything — has to do with love of God and love of neighbor. It may say it in a different way or form, or apply it differently, but that is the bottom line.

If we who are Christians participate in the political process and in the public discourse as we are called to do — the New Testament tells us that we are to participate in the life of the polis, in the life of our society — the principle on which Christians must vote is the principle, Does this look like love of neighbor? If it does, we do it; if it doesn’t, we don’t.

We evaluate candidates based on that. We evaluate public policy based on that. And that has nothing to do with whether you’re a Republican or a Democrat, liberal or conservative. It has to do with if you say you’re a follower of Jesus, then you enter the public sphere based on the principle of love which is seeking the good and the welfare of the ‘other.’ That’s a game-changer.

I share these words because we live in complicated times.

Recent events on Mauna Kea have caused disagreements between Episcopalians within our congregations. A few (five sent e-mails and one sent a fax) disagreed with what I wrote in a “Teaching” and what was shared by two Priests in a “Statement.” Many more contacted me to express approval or, at least, understanding of the perspective shared. Admittedly, others just may not respond or, actually, do not really care what the Episcopal Bishop of Hawai‘i or our Priests might write (this is even true of some Episcopalians). Everyone has an opinion (I certainly understand that there are multiple opinions with a range of hopes for all those who think about it – it certainly is not merely for TMT and against TMT).

Likewise, words of politicians and actions of governments bring disagreements and the call to respond.

As Christians and as Episcopalians, we are called to be engaged citizens and to vote in civil elections. In our constitutional republic, though the Church and clergy should not endorse candidates or particular party, I do think we must speak on issues of public policy and on the morality of laws and proposed civic actions. We need to hold our leaders accountable for their behavior and words. Further, as citizens, faithful Christians must view candidates and policies in relation to our understanding of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Bishops and Priests are called to be teachers of the Gospel in a broken world. As Paul reminds us in his Letter to the Ephesians (6:12): “We aren’t fighting against human enemies but against rulers, authorities, forces of cosmic darkness, and spiritual powers of evil in the heavens.” While we will disagree about policies and a vision for our civic community’s future, we must do so in love and, above all, humility. We must not be afraid to speak the truth of the Gospel, and demand justice and peace respecting the dignity of every human being and God’s creation.

Conclusion

When I was ordained a Bishop in 2007, Presiding Bishop Katharine gave me a plaque with the words of Roman Catholic bishop Helder Camara of South America:

The bishop belongs to all. Let no one be scandalized if I frequent those who are considered unworthy or sinful. Who is not a sinner? Let no one be alarmed if I am seen with compromised and dangerous people, on the left or the right. Let no one bind me to a group. My door, my heart, must be open to everyone -- absolutely everyone.

As one called to serve you, please forgive me when I have failed you. Celebrate with me the times we together have served God and God’s people rightly with love and joy.

I continue as the “Bishop Protector” of the Society of St. Francis. This is a Franciscan religious order of men in the Episcopal Church who maintain the traditional vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. The earliest Franciscan manuscripts ascribe the following prayer to Francis himself and they tell us that it was offered before the Crucifix in San Damiano [see [Francis of Assisi: Early Documents](#), p. 40]:

*Most High,
glorious God,
enlighten the darkness of my heart,
and give me
true faith,
certain hope,
and perfect charity,
sense and knowledge,
Lord,
that I may carry out
Your holy and true command.*

It is by these words that I look forward to serving you in the days and years ahead.

As Paul urges us (in 2nd Corinthians 5:20): “So we are ambassadors who represent Christ. God is negotiating with you through us. We beg you as Christ’s representatives, ‘Be reconciled to God!’”

Respectfully submitted,

+ Robert L. Fitzpatrick

The Right Reverend Robert L. Fitzpatrick, Bishop Diocesan
The Episcopal Diocese of Hawai'i