

The Rev. Lura M. Kaval

From the cradle I was raised in the “High Church” tradition. I was greatly influenced by our worship and Anglican theology, although the impact of this formation wasn’t clear until my mid-twenties. I love being an Episcopalian because I was taught that the questions about God and our faith are always more important than the answers, and our faith journeys are as important as our destination. These convictions I hold are based on our founding Anglican principles.

During the reformation our Anglican Tradition was greatly influenced by Roman Catholics and Puritans who took the position that they knew the mind of God quite well. Richard Hooker observed in *The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, “Two things there are which greatly trouble these later times: one that the Church of Rome cannot, another that Geneva will not erre.”ⁱ This idea is reiterated by contemporary theologian L. William Countryman, “Classic Anglicanism did not expect the church to have a detailed and certain knowledge of the mind of God.”ⁱⁱ

No person or institution will ever be able to completely know God’s will. Anglican theology prescribes that through individual, community and institutional discernment that the Holy Spirit will lead us, so that we can try to understand God’s will.

Should doctrine take the place of dialogue? Is utility better than unity? Jesus provides us with a holy and evolving model in John’s gospel. In Jesus’ farewell prayer he asks the Father to keep his disciples safe and to make them one, like he and the Father are one (17:11). The unity of God as Father and the Son is founded on their relationship. John’s gospel describes how the Father and the Son (3:16, 5:16, 6:43, 7:60, 10:25, 12:37, 14:5) are in relationship, and in unity with each other. Augustine observes that the outcome of this intense relationship, or the Love that the Father and Son have for each other, is the manifestation of Holy Spirit God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are all-different and yet are God. Exploring this holy paradigm of unity and diversity is a worthy effort. Yet, living in unity is much harder than believing in it.

The charge of a bishop is “to guard the faith, unity, and discipline of the Church,”ⁱⁱⁱ a daunting task in this day and age. Borrowing a medical metaphor, to minister to the Body of Christ in the world, a bishop must be an internist, physical therapist, psychiatrist, and possibly a surgeon. But no doctor or bishop can provide the healing care necessary without having a relationship and hopefully compassion, for the body, the person.

Inherent in humanity is the desire for homogeneity. We do our best to find people who are the same as we are and then we create an *us vs. them* scenario in order to feel unified. Unfortunately we cut each other off and the body then becomes paralyzed or diseased. Unity in the midst of diversity, while hard, promotes health.

God’s creation is never static. Health is an environmental unity that allows constructive change while creating stability. We are called as a diocese, as the Body of Christ in the world to grow and strengthen ourselves so that we work for the Kingdom of God here on earth. Healing begins by listening to symptoms, examining the pain, identifying dis-ease, running tests if necessary, diagnosing the problems and communicating as many possible solutions as needed to achieve physical and spiritual health.

I have worked in medical hospitals and in hospitals of ministry, the Church. The gifts God gives me continue to lead me to those who are sick, broken and/or in need of healing. I am offering these gifts and my love for God and the Episcopal Church to the Diocese of Maryland in hopes that we

can celebrate our differences and unite around a common vision of health.

ⁱ Richard Hooker. Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity (Ellicott City, Md. 2004) vol.1,) p.91.

ⁱⁱ L. William Countryman, Dealing with Conflict as Anglicans (Convention 2003) www.thewitness.org.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ordination of a Bishop, The Book of Common Prayer (New York, NY 1979) p.517.