

REPORT OF THE GENERAL CONVENTION DEPUTATION
May 1, 2009

LAY

Ms. Alma Thompson Bell
Mr. Russell R. Reno, Jr.
Ms. Jean Chapman
Mr. Lee Weber

1st Alternate
Mr. David G. Mallery

Bishops:
The Rt. Rev. Eugene T. Sutton, Bishop Diocesan
The Rt. Rev. John L. Rabb, Bishop Suffragan

CLERGY

The Rev. Canon Mary D. Glasspool
The Rev. Scott P. Bellows
The Rev. Angela F. Shepherd
The Rev. Adrien Dawson

1st Alternate
The Rev. Allen F. Robinson

From 1984 until 1992, I had the privilege of serving a small, urban neighborhood parish in Boston. St. Luke's and St. Margaret's, or SLAM, as we were affectionately known, was located just off the Boston College Green Line at Packard's Corner, halfway between Boston University and Boston College. Since many people had no idea where Packard's Corner was, and there was a lot of territory between Boston University and Boston College, we were more easily found and thus identified as "that little church next to the Toyota Dealership on Brighton Avenue."

One sunny October day, when I had been at SLAM less than one month, I had to officiate at a funeral for a beloved parishioner who had hung onto her life until the new rector was ensconced. The cemetery in which she was buried was five miles from the church, and as was the custom, at least in Boston, I rode in the hearse with the funeral director, completely vested in cassock, surplice, tippet, and academic hood, which probably wasn't necessary but it was colorful and I didn't know any better. After the rather solemn committal, the funeral director drove me back to the church, and dropped me off at the corner. I hurried to the parish house door to take my vestments off in order to be on time for a lunch date with the Dean of Episcopal Divinity School, only to find the parish house tightly locked. I ran around the corner to the front door of the church, which was also locked. Then I ran over to the Rectory, which was serving as a group home, and banged on the locked door as loudly as I could. None of the five individuals who lived there were home.

With no money, no phone, no keys, and only my Prayer Book in hand, I smoothed out my surplice, straightened my tippet, and walked across the street to the Toyota Dealership. Unfortunately, it was not a very busy day for the seven salesmen on the showroom floor, and they were each sitting at their desks scattered around various Tercels and Camrys when I opened the door and walked in. Seven pairs of eyes looked up with some anticipation, and then froze as I did my best to look sober and sane. After at least 60 seconds of complete silence, one of the salesmen stood up and said, "Something tells me you're not here to buy a Toyota." I smiled and

said, “No, but if you let me use your phone, I promise you the next car I buy will be a Toyota.”

I called the Junior Warden who promised to be right over with keys to the building, and after thanking profusely the staff of the Toyota Dealership, I emerged onto the street just as the Dean was pulling up in his car. He got out with an ear-splitting grin and said to me, “Well, a new form of evangelism, I see. I can’t wait to preach about this!” A new form of evangelism it turned out to be, as two of the seven salesmen actually did join the church, and I replaced my aging Ford Maverick with a Toyota Tercel Hatchback.

Evangelism - the sharing of the good news of Jesus, the Christ, is the life blood of the Church. And at the 76th General Convention of the Episcopal Church, to be held in Anaheim, California from July 8 to the 17th, evangelism will take the form of an exciting project called Public Narrative. Public Narrative is a leadership tool that encourages participants to get in touch with their own, authentic passions and motivations for mission. What is it about my own vocation that blows my hair back, that makes me want to engage with others, that sets my own heart on fire? This is called: the story of *self*.

The second part of Public Narrative is the story of *us*. Who are we as a community? How do we work together? What are our core values? That’s pretty much the nature and essence of what we’re doing at this convention and the next: engaging, sharing, and articulating the story of *us* as the Diocese of Maryland. As I learn to tell my own story, I need to be able to connect it to the story of *us*, to my community, to the Diocese of Maryland. What is the vocation, the call from God, that I and this community share, that we have in common?

The third part of Public Narrative is the story of *now*. The story of *now* is, perhaps obviously, not the story of *later*. There is urgency in the *now*, as well as a challenge and a choice. A practitioner of Public Narrative needs to be able to express the hope of a better future in such a way as to motivate others to take sometimes risky action. We need to be able to articulate why the action *matters*, and the outcome we hope to achieve.

When we tie it all together, when we link the story of self with the story of us and the story of now, an entire community can have a powerful tool for telling our public story, and moving the mission of the Church forward. And what is the mission of the Church? *The mission of the Church is to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ.* (BCP, p.855)

I share all of this with you because Public Narrative can be a way to articulate *Ubuntu* - an African concept made popular by Archbishop Desmond Tutu and the theme of General Convention. In Archbishop Tutu’s words, *a person is a person through other people*, or, *I am what I am because of who we all are*, or, *me/we*. In John’s Gospel, Jesus says *I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.* (John 14:18-20)

Your Deputation to General Convention is going to Anaheim not simply to wrestle with the budget, address issues of doing justice and alleviating poverty, worship, pray, and attend countless meetings and hearings and meals. We’re not going to Anaheim just to talk about the

Anglican Covenant, and promote Anglican Partnerships, and claim our identity as Christians in an increasingly multi-cultural and pluralistic world. We will do all of that, God willing. But we are also going to Anaheim to intentionally engage with hundreds of others in *Ubuntu*, in articulating the mission and ministry of Jesus Christ, which is the mission and ministry of the Church. We are going to Anaheim to listen, to learn, and to grow, for the sake of Christ. And we are going to Anaheim to share our stories: the story of *self*, the story of *us*, and the story of *now*, so that in so doing, we can all be agents for the reconciliation of the world to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

We ask for your prayers. And we offer our profound gratitude for the privilege of serving the Diocese of Maryland as Deputies to General Convention. Thank you.

The Rev. Canon Mary D. Glasspool, for the Deputation