



## *The Call for A Suffragan Bishop — 1*

The lay delegates, bishops, priests and deacons of the Diocese of Maryland met for our 229th Annual Convention in Linthicum, Maryland, on Friday and Saturday of last week. We listened to two terrific keynote addresses by The Rev'd Brian McLaren (a recently retired pastor known nationwide for his work in Congregational Development and the Emergent Church movement), we debated resolutions, we listened to reports from a variety of ministries, and discussed the discernment and formation process that leads some people to be ordained as priests or deacons. The most important thing that we did at this convention was to hear the call from Bishop Sutton for the election of a Bishop Suffragan and to affirm publically that call. So it seems an apropos moment for a quick refresher on the types and ministries of bishops in the Episcopal Church.

A key understanding in our process of choosing leaders is that a diocese is a “place.” Because it is the basic organizing unit of ministry in the Episcopal Church, every diocese has a Diocesan Bishop — sometimes called “the Ordinary” because she or he maintains the order of things in that place, including welcoming appropriate candidates into the “holy orders” of the diaconate and the priesthood. The Right Rev'd Eugene T. Sutton is (and if you have met him or have heard him preach you will smile at the irony of this identification!) our Ordinary. This keeping of order requires a bishop to visit each congregation at least once in every three years. Some places are bigger or more scattered than others. So there has always been provision in our Canons to insure that visitations occur, if not by the Ordinary, at least by a bishop elected or designated to work with Ordinary. In The Episcopal Church this is typically a Bishop Suffragan.



The word Suffragan comes to us with a double meaning. The Latin root of the word concerns voting, and you will no doubt have heard of the “suffragettes” who advocated for the right of women to vote in the 19th century. But in the Church, the word also is connected with prayer. In particular, the sequence of alternating verses and responses offered after the Lord’s Prayer in the services of Morning and Evening prayer is called a suffrage. (See page 55 in the Prayerbook, for example.) Taken together, these roots suggest that a Suffragan — though clearly subordinate to the Ordinary — shares a ministry of prayer, discernment and action with the Diocesan Bishop.

Though it is not as common as it used to be, sometimes a diocese will elect a Bishop Coadjutor. This person serves as an assisting bishop but with the right automatically to succeed the Ordinary when he or she leaves office. The Constitution of The Episcopal Church requires that this take place no more than three years after she or he is consecrated. The Rt. Rev'd A.

Theodore Eastman was the last Coadjutor elected in Maryland in 1982.

Diocesan Bishops, Suffragans and Coadjutors are all elected by a Diocesan Convention, usually following a search or nominating process. Though there are exceptions, the normal expectation is that they serve in that diocese until retirement or death. Increasingly, Diocesan Bishops have exercised another option to make available the unique ministries of a bishop, the hiring of an Assistant Bishop. This is a bishop who has retired or resigned from the Diocese that elected her or him, and who works for a couple of years in another diocese with the Ordinary. This has happened three times in the Diocese of Maryland. The Right Rev'd Barry Valentine, formerly of the Diocese of Prince Rupert's Land in Canada served with Bishop Eastman from late 1985 to the beginning of 1988 when he stepped down under difficult circumstances. Fortunately successive Assistants have had much more productive years in Maryland. The Right Rev'd Donald Hart, formerly Bishop of Hawaii, served here in the middle 1990's and our current Assistant Bishop, The Right Rev'd Joe Burnett, has been with us since 2010, both of them serving us on a full time basis. In addition, Bishops Rodney Michael (formerly of Long Island) and Michael Creighton assisted Bishop John Rabb on a very part-time basis during before the election of Bishop Sutton.

Watch this column for stories about past Bishops Suffragan in Maryland and also for reflections on why it is important to think about a diocese as a unique and specific place.

*Totidem Verbis*

*Mark Gatzka+*



## *The Call for A Suffragan Bishop — 2*

As you enter the front door of our Diocesan Center at 4 East University Parkway in Baltimore, on your immediate right you will see an impressive plaque naming the bishops who have served us since Thomas John Claggett was consecrated in 1792 — the first to be so on American soil. There are nineteen names listed on the plaque, seventeen elected by the Diocese and two appointed to work as assistants. There is one omission: The Rt. Rev'd Donald P. Hart also served as an Assisting Bishop in the middle 1990's.

Five of our bishops were elected as Suffragans. In two cases, they were intended to care for particular geographic areas within the diocese. James Kemp was elected in 1814 to serve Maryland's Eastern Shore, since the Chesapeake Bay was a formidable barrier to easy travel. (Here, Maryland followed the pattern established a few years earlier in New York, when John Henry Hobart was elected to



evangelize upstate.) In 1972, Maryland elected William J. Cox to serve in Western Maryland, working out of a satellite office in Frederick. Sadly, neither of these two geographic experiments can be said to have been successful. Kemp was soon spending most of his time on the Western Shore as Bishop Claggett's health failed and leading, decades later, to the division of the state into two dioceses. A series of complicated theological and polity disagreements, along with the difficulty in coordinating two diocesan offices, brought Bishop Cox to an early resignation.

For most of our history the desire for an orderly transition between bishops led to the election of Coadjutors — bishops elected to a diocese to serve side-by-side with an Ordinary until the latter retired. Seven of our bishops were coadjutors first, from our fifth bishop, William Pinkney (1879) through our twelfth, A. Theodore Eastman in 1982. One of these, Harry Lee Doll, was elected as Suffragan in 1955 and then elected again as Coadjutor in 1958 — a reminder of the fact that Bishops Suffragan have no automatic right to become a Bishop Diocesan.

Maryland's last two Bishops Suffragan have taken on a new and interesting role in their episcopal ministries. Charles L. Longest was elected to serve during a time which everyone knew would involve the retirement of Bishop Eastman and the election of Maryland's 13th bishop. Instead of a Search Committee, a Nominating committee was formed and charged with creating a slate of three or four senior clergy from within the diocese. Bishop Longest then served as Bishop-in-Charge after Bishop Eastman retired, and continued as Suffragan for the first couple of years of Bishop Ihloff's tenure. In turn, Bishop Suffragan John L. Rabb became Bishop-in-Charge and provided the same continuity during the transition between Bishop Ihloff and Bishop Sutton. The advantages this recent pattern offered help create an atmosphere where both a new bishop from outside the diocese and the congregations that have been here for as many as 340 years learned to work with each other.

There are undoubtedly other models of how Suffragan bishops can serve in a diocese, and

there are more than a handful of cases in 225 years of a Suffragan being elected a Diocesan Bishop in a new diocese. The Search Committee that is being called together and the Standing Committee of our diocese which will oversee it, together with Bishop Sutton, will have plenty of options to consider even before they begin to recruit candidates.

*Totidem Verbis*

*Mark Gatzka+*



## *The Call for a Suffragan Bishop — 3*

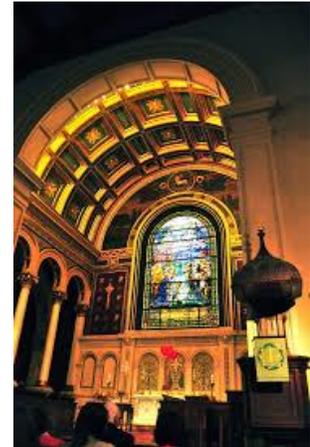
Previously in this series of reflections on Bishop Sutton's call for the election of a Suffragan Bishop to assist him I mentioned my sense of the importance of the fact that a diocese is a place. That comes in large part from my own experience with several search committees charged with screening candidates for bishops around the county. As I responded to these nominations, as I answered the questionnaires that are invariably part of the process, I paid careful attention to this concern: Is this a diocese, is this a place, that I can connect with? This was for me a very different question than those that deal with the experience, qualifications and the skills necessary to be a good bishop.

In many cases, some of them surprising at the time, the answer was no. For example, of the six places I spent time as a child that have been through episcopal elections, my strongest sense of connection was with the Diocese of California — in which I lived for only a few months as a three year old! Second to that was Western New York, where I was born, but lived only until I was two. I have been nominated in Dioceses in which I never lived but was able to connect with quickly and in some cases deeply. But there were more nominations that I either turned down outright or in the interview process came to understand that this just wasn't the right place for me.

There were, for me, both tangible and intangible signs of connection. First and foremost, did the diocese have a clear sense of its mission? What about its history? Were congregations planted as part of a plan or more by way of circumstance? How have they dealt with conflict? What do they expect the future to bring? Do they have traditions about where their bishops come from? This last question is particularly interesting. Until their last election, the Diocese of Connecticut always raised up a bishop from among the priests serving there, while the Diocese of East Tennessee typically elects someone from somewhere else. In Maryland our last three Diocesan Bishops have come from elsewhere, while our last three Suffragans had significant

experience in our ten counties and the City of Baltimore.

It is always a challenge to articulate the intangibles that are part of a process of discernment. Here is where the language of place has made the most sense to me. Perhaps you are like me in that every once in a while, you find you self in a place — and not necessarily a church — that just seems holy. There is something about it that helps you to feel God’s presence more fully, and to appreciate God’s majesty just a little more than in other places. Sometimes it is part of the natural landscape, but many times holy places are created by the vision and labor of holy women and holy men. The current church building of Old St. Paul’s Parish, on Charles Street in Baltimore, when it was built in 1868, was intended to be a bastion of holiness amid the noise, dirt and danger of the



industrial culture that surrounded it. Some holy places are secular: Each time I have visited the Strategic Air Command museum outside of Omaha, Nebraska, I have been deeply moved by the sacrifices and the courage of the men and women represented there who stood up to the challenges of the Cold War that might literally have destroyed our world.

Holy places, in their turn, beget more holy men and holy women, who continue the good work that flows from there despite human sin and the devil’s wiles. In my discernment, I found that the quicker I was able to identify holy places in a diocese, the easier it was for me to feel the connection, and those places where I was not able to see signs of holiness in this particular way were easy to say no to.

So, when the candidates for Maryland’s next Suffragan Bishop are introduced next spring, I will be waiting to ask them what connections they have made to our place and what holiness they have found here. There are many, many, many possibilities to choose from!

*Totidem Verbis*

*Mark Gatzka+*