

1) What in our profile sparks excitement in your becoming the next Bishop of Maryland? What skills, gifts, and possibilities do you bring to meet us where we are?

As I read and prayed about your profile it quickly became clear that there was such strong resonance with who I am and what I believe that I needed to give it very serious attention. Perhaps the greatest and most important spark was when you clearly named the source, focus, and goal of your life together: “Our faith is centered on the Good News revealed in Holy Scripture and made real in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.” After all, on what else could we build? The sky is the limit, and all things are possible, once that foundation is secure.

Many other sparks followed. I am drawn to the diversity of geography, of parish sizes, and of worship styles within the Diocese. I grew up in a small town in the mountains of Virginia, so I feel I would have a ready appreciation of some of the glories and challenges of your rural parishes. I have served in urban areas and love the islands of peace, sanity, and hope that parish churches can be there. I have been a rector in suburban areas, so I appreciate the unique challenges that commuting, busy schedules, and societal pressures can bring to bear in those areas. I have also served in higher, lower, and broad-Church settings, all of which have taught me that the intention and care we bring to worship are more important than the style in which we worship.

I am very excited by the number of Episcopal schools within the Diocese. My children have all gone to Episcopal schools, and my wife has served as a school chaplain, so I have some sense of the struggle to maintain Episcopal identity while also leading with a wide welcome, and of the vital, unique witness our schools can bring to God’s children in that pivotal age. I was also delighted to see how you note the importance of your discernment processes and their results, as I have been a leader for years in the ordination process in my diocese; I believe this work is crucial to the future of a healthy Church.

I believe you were also the first diocese to take to heart the call to the work of reparations, concretely working to repair the ancient breach caused by slavery and racism. I am inspired and challenged by how the Diocese is naming the shadow side of its history, its complicity in the evils of slavery, the Jim Crow era, and all that follows, much as we name our sins in confession. I believe racism is our original national sin, but also that forgiveness is available, even for original sin. Racial healing and justice should be approached in light of eternity and our baptismal identity in Jesus Christ. That beloved future begins with truth-telling now, including repairing breaches caused by the Church itself, and giving folks a whole new reason to be proud of being a Maryland Episcopalian. The fact that reparations passed your Convention unanimously means that leadership did the hard work of preparing the soil, making the case, and reaching out to all. It also speaks of a diocese able to unite around an important cause, where differing voices are welcomed at the table and represented in the final result.

I have benefitted from time at Claggett, so I know and value the incredible resource it is to the Diocese, and the broad potential it represents for retreats, education, summer camps, and growth in discipleship. I love the fact that you have a Cathedral as a central spiritual focus, with the diocesan offices also right there. I am so glad to read of the outreach to seafarers, the Sutton Scholars program, and that you are seeking someone who can bring people together, while communicating a clear vision. I admired the way that you named the Heather Cook tragedy in an honest and up-front way, without dwelling on it. I like that this is a Coadjutor position, with the opportunity to work side-by-side with a bishop known and respected across the Church.

Having served in the Diocese several years ago, I know something of the heritage and powerful history of the Diocese of Maryland, and have some glimmer of the myriad lives touched by God through its life and ministry. I asked a clergy person who had served there very recently if this person thought the diocesan system, on the whole, was healthy. The response was a firm “yes.”

As for me, I am a passionate believer in God and in God’s people, and I strive to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. I am a bridge-builder, bringing people together across differences and conflict and toward a common vision. Preaching and teaching are absolutely life-giving to me and a source of deep joy. Any time, any place, and in any way that I can help God’s children to realize that they are beloved of God, and that God’s outrageous action in Jesus Christ has deeply personal, life-changing ramifications for them, I feel I am fulfilling one of my purposes on this earth. I have served widely in Church governance and I have been a rector for over 20 years, where I have celebrated, challenged, mourned, and prayed with surely some of God’s most interesting people. I love those people, from children and youth to seniors.

I lead with encouragement and challenge, and I am generally a centrist in my faith. I hire people to round out my gifts and to compensate for my weaknesses. I am an engaged learner, able to change. I stress the invitation to stewardship, and I am awed by the Holy Spirit’s work when we show up together. I don’t take myself too seriously, but I take the faith very seriously.

2) In the OTM, you discussed your experience with conflict. Has there been an experience where you have felt the need to apologize? If so, how did you apologize?

When I became a rector for the first time I wanted to make a really good start, but I was also green as anything. I was returning from serving in England, with great dreams and enthusiasm (think Ted Lasso). I decided to follow a then-current personnel practice, that of asking every employee to submit a *pro-forma* resignation which I would file away and then consider whether or not to accept after six months.

This proved to be deeply hurtful to several of the staff. Not only did they feel that they had no job security, but they felt that their ministry in the parish was being de-valued and that they were expendable. I had heard of many other new rectors following this process, plus I figured I would likely ask all of the staff to stay on, so it didn’t seem that out of the ordinary to me. So I was a bit surprised by their reactions. As I got to know them, though, and learned of their long history in the parish, I began to realize I had made a terrible mistake. This request had become a source of real pain.

I began the apology by naming the issue at a staff meeting, assuring them that this practice was widely followed in the Church at the time, and that it had absolutely nothing to do with them personally. I also said that I was sorry that I had hurt them and that I did not mean to devalue their ministry or their long tenure in the parish. I then brought it up in individual conversations with each staff member. I also worked to get to know them, asking about their frustrations in their positions, as well as their hopes and what brought them joy and fulfillment. I reminded them of the vital role of their ministry to our ministry as a whole.

Then I ripped up those letters. I committed to myself, and to them, that I would never ask for *pro-forma* resignations again. Thankfully this apology seemed to land with most of them and we moved on. With one, though, I think my action contributed to his leaving to take another position

in another church. I did my best to celebrate his ministry among us and bless him on his departure. As I became rector in another parish I did not even consider taking this approach.

3) The Diocese of Maryland has a broad diversity in its geography and membership. Many people expressed a desire to be more connected across the diocese. Describe your experience and leadership style in navigating systems across lines of difference.

My sponsoring rector gave me some helpful advice before seminary: He said that in ministry, as long as people know you love the Lord, you love them, and you love what you do (at least on most days), they will forgive you almost anything. That advice reminded me that legitimate pastoral leadership is all about integrity of relationship.

Forming connection and true community is a central calling of a leader. A bishop, for instance, needs to be seen as belonging to all, yet belonging to *no one in particular*. The leader truly needs to love the system and the myriad people who comprise it. I believe navigating difference first involves deep listening and prayerful presence with each person or group. It means coming to see them as precious, unique, blessed children of God, beyond any other identity.

People crave honesty in a leader, someone who will tell the truth even when they don't want to hear it. The leader needs to be accessible, meaning it is actually possible to get in touch with them and to get a response. They need to share, appropriately, from their own vulnerability, not coming across as always having all of the answers. The leader needs to admit mistakes and then be able to change course. Godly care and empathy need to radiate from the Christian leader.

As bishop I would lead across differences by building upon our *commonality*, chiefly our common humanity and, in the Church, our oneness in Christ. The Church should be able to bridge difference better than anybody else. Our shared identity is what will last, and it's the most stable and enduring basis on which to build a community that can authentically welcome wildly different children of God. As St. Paul said, "There is a variety of gifts. . . but it is the same spirit that animates them all (1 Cor. 12:4-6). I also would find it essential to foster and build upon strategic and ecumenical partnerships, particularly in working toward the more just world we can all agree is part of God's dream.

I was also heartened to read in your profile that many of your people clearly like being together and, in fact, want to do more together. That is not always the case. I would like to leverage the vital role of the *bishop as convener*, bringing different groups and subsets of the diocese together to further common mission, to dream, to pray, and to venture out together, while being better resourced for having been together. So much could be gained from calling together the chaplains of the Diocese, the wardens, the treasurers, the assistant clergy, the rectors and vicars, the deacons, the retired clergy, the mission parishes, the rural parishes, the majority African-American or Spanish-language parishes, the clergy couples – and I could go on! Clearly the Diocese wants to build upon the good work of your current bishop, while also benefitting from the passions and experiences of your next chief pastor. It would be a true joy and honor to work with the Diocese on becoming ever more the Beloved Community God dreams for it, while healing from the old sins of racism, classism, sexism, and so many other ways in which we have forgotten our true identity and home.

I have found as a leader, especially across difference, that I have to earn people's trust; it's not automatically given. We all need to trust in order to feel connected. I need to show that I love the people in my care. I need to prove that I can hold a confidence, that I will show up when I say I will, and that we can disagree and still maintain relationship. I have to assume goodwill on the part of the other, unless that assumption is proven wrong.

I have used these approaches with Republicans, Democrats, and Independents; with newcomers and old-timers; with theological and political liberals and conservatives; with the very wealthy and the very poor; and across races, ethnicities, and nationalities. They work well across many lines of difference, and I believe they would be vital to use as a bishop. This might be especially true as a bishop is called to help traditional parishes thrive while also being open to newer expressions of Church, such as house churches, or to discern whether some ministries might need to merge while at the same time we need to plant new churches in some other areas.

4) Where is your voice when big issues come up in the world? How do you balance world issues with diocesan issues?

I take very seriously the calling, responsibility, and deep privilege a Christian leader has in speaking out on issues in our world, especially when it comes to proclaiming God's justice. We are heirs of the prophets, who so often said, "Thus says the Lord!" (Jer. 33:2). Yet I am also deeply aware of how easy it would be to abuse the bully pulpit, or the pastoral statement. I am grateful for the opportunity to reflect on how I have balanced this calling with the accompanying challenges.

Any statement I offer must be grounded in Scripture, prayer, and our baptismal promises. I must remember that the statement is not about me, and that I am not trying to please or impress anyone in particular. I need to recognize that the statement might offend some, but I also need to make sure that offense is not my goal. My call is to be a pastor to all, while calling for righteousness and justice in the public square.

I strive to speak from the broad middle of our tradition in naming what is clearly outside God's dreams and plans for us and for all humanity. I aim to be prophetic, while remembering that I am always preaching to myself, as well. Lastly, I weigh the frequency with which I issue statements, knowing that speaking too often can encourage folks to tune out.

I pray that my statements have a spiritual and Kingdom approach, always reminding folks that part of our precious calling is to partner with God in the healing of the world. There also should be a logical continuity between the ways in which we address parish or diocesan issues and the ways in which we speak to world issues. In recent years, for example, I have issued statements about our response to the pandemic, the murder of George Floyd, and the January 6th riot at the Capitol.

5) In the Diocese of Maryland, a part of our discernment process for ministry includes a program known as Exploring Baptismal Ministry. In this program, those exploring their call read books on a variety of topics. These books have included theological texts, memoirs, social justice and scriptural materials. If you were creating this program, which book would you want to ensure was read during this program?

My wife reminds me how I am not usually given to superlatives. Indeed, I can think of many books I would want to see represented. Yet one book came to me clearly and unmistakably: *The*

Dream of God: A Call to Return, by Verna J. Dozier. Dozier speaks from her deep, lived experience as a teacher and a lay theologian, a long-time communicant, and a Black woman. Her teaching had a profound impact upon Bishop Michael Curry and his preaching about God's dreams for us. I find such challenge in this book, as well as such inspiration. It would be ideal for anyone seeking to take the call to ministry seriously.

Dozier names three great falls in our history: the fall away from complete dependence on God by Adam and Eve; when the people of Israel demanded God give them a king so they could be like everyone else around them; and when the Church embraced established, imperial status under Constantine. She argues passionately that the institutional switch that happened at that time, moving away from the vibrant, status quo-challenging movement established by Jesus, led to the impoverishment of a true sense of ministry for most people in the Church. She begs us to remember that all God's people are called to ministry, as your *Exploring Baptismal Ministry* program seems also to emphasize.

We are blessed, called, and empowered for that ministry in Baptism, which is further stirred up in Confirmation. Dozier does not disparage or denigrate the need for ordained ministry, but she insists it be properly understood and placed within that core baptismal framework. She also names unflinchingly our age-old sins of clericalism and our addiction to power, money, and status, as well as reminding us never to worship the institutional Church as an end in itself.

The institutional model includes a focus on membership, on coming to Church on occasion, perhaps giving some comfortable amount for the Church's maintenance. It is passive, with stress on having been baptized and confirmed, perhaps married in the Church, and looking to be buried from the Church. There is little incentive to learn the biblical story, and one is deeply hesitant to speak very much of one's faith outside the church walls. There is little sense of ongoing conversion. The ramifications are myriad, from a maintenance mindset of Church instead of a missional one, to struggling with finances and limited stewardship at both the parochial and diocesan levels, to producing an anemic spirituality ill-equipped to witness to the seeker or the scoffer.

Compare this to a faithful approach that says that God's dream for us is the abundant life, a life that starts now and continues throughout eternity. That entails a hunger to learn our sacred story, to partake deeply of the sacraments as life-saving conduits of God's grace, to meet and greet all we encounter as beloved children of God, and to consider our use of all of the resources placed within our charge in light of our faith. It also involves being unafraid, even eager, to share the faith that is in us, in a humble way that also listens to the experience of others. It involves a deep love of Jesus, which is nourished in an ongoing rhythm of sustained prayer and service to others.

As I have read and re-read this work I am always brought up short and reminded Whose ministry it is in which I share. I can't say I agree with everything Dozier says, such as her stress that Jesus is to be followed, not worshiped, while I believe our call is to do both. But I am so grateful for this foundational witness that seems truly to tap into some of God's original dream. I believe this would speak to seekers in *Exploring Baptismal Ministry*, whether they were discerning lay or ordained ministry.

I have tried to bear this theme in mind as I have served as Chair of our Committee on Priesthood, on the Standing Committee, and on the Commission on Ministry. I look for this openness to call

in raising up aspirants from the congregation, in training seminarians, in our relationship with the Seminary across the street, and in training newly-ordained deacons.

While I value Dozier's reminder of the call of ministry to all of the baptized, I believe she would agree with me in saying that does not mean we should treat our clergy *less* well than anyone else. While there are clearly signs of the sin of clericalism around us, there are also myriad horror stories from clergy who speak of being disrespected in search or ordination processes, or dropped from those searches with no reason ever given. Clearly, we are called to better, and we must do better.

6) Our people have identified that openness, transparency and communication are important issues in the diocese. What experience do you have to work on this with us?

While there are confidences a bishop (or rector) must maintain, we must aim to be as clear as possible in communicating what we are doing, and why. There is an element of ministry that is a business, and our goal should be the highest standards of accountability and transparency in our financial life as possible. I always look for thorough audits and reliable systems of checks and balances, for example.

The teaching office of the bishop is also, I believe, a key aspect of transparency, along with the call to be a bridge-builder. Just as a long-serving, well-seasoned rector comes to be one of the best sources of information about the needs of a parish as a whole, so does the bishop. The bishop must communicate success stories from across the diocese, as well as reminding one part of the body where another part of the body is in trouble, and how they might help (1 Cor. 12). The bishop also oversees the efficient use of all of the tools at our disposal for communications: the diocesan web page, e-blasts, social media, pastoral letters, clergy conferences, parish visitations, preaching opportunities, diocesan posters made for parishes and schools, and bringing that whole picture to bear in individual pastoral care with clergy. Tools like Zoom can be used strategically to enhance communication, while also saving time and energy.

The bishop is also called to be a keeper of the vision that has been discerned through prayerful listening by the community. The bishop calls the community to account about how they are living into the vision, and how strategic goals are being met.

I aim, regularly, to examine every communication tool at my disposal, asking how we can deploy those tools to maximum effectiveness, while coordinating across staff positions and asking how we can best promote an event or update the congregation within a specific segment of the system as a whole. Guiding questions are: 1) What good news do we have to share? 2) What kinds of information do the people of God need to engage their ministries fully? and 3) Where is the need for a word of challenge or encouragement, or both?

This question, and your naming of its importance to the Diocese, tells me that people want to be involved, they want to know what is going on, and they want to know how they can be a part of it. Perhaps they might also be looking for reminders of how their local ministries are integral to a larger whole, and how that diocesan life, in turn, is part of a larger and larger circle of the life of the whole Church. There is much goodwill here on which to build!