



Episcopal Diocese of Easton
Founded 1865 Established 1868
The Calling into Being of a Pro-Cathedral Church
St. Peter's Episcopal Church
Salisbury, Maryland
"A Missional Imperative for a Diocese in God's Mission"

Preamble

Without doubt, cathedrals are important not only as sacred edifices that symbolize the physical presence of the Church in any district or city, but also as prominent places of witness and service that offer to the church and the world a sign of stability, stature, sanctity, and spiritual strength. The care with which they have been constructed all over the places the Christian faith is practiced, and the historic meaning that they are able to convey by their very existence, can always be understood to carry their own distinctive message about the centrality of the Christian Faith and the need for an ever-increasing sense of growth, and grace, and religious fervor. This is not to suggest that the God to whom they, or any or Christian edifice, should be seen merely as the "dwelling place of the divine", since it is deeply rooted in the Christian tradition that the God of the Christians does not dwell in any edifice made with hands. Cathedrals that serve the purpose of rallying the faithful together so as to disperse the faithful into the spheres of God world for mission, ministry, and human maturity cathedrals become the collective instruments for gathering as well as the corporate sources for scattering. The gathered church is at one and the same time the scattered church. The sowing of the seed of the Word of God is as important as the gathering of the fruit of the harvest of the works of God through human hands, and hearts, and holiness.

The mission and ministry of cathedrals then, are not simply parochial, or parish based, they are to be seen as the work and with of and to the entire diocese. This particular sphere of ministry is led by the bishop of the Diocese as Chief Pastor, and Chief Evangelist. Strategies of scattering the Word must always be accompanied by strategies of time, and space, and place – for, in any case, the laws of physics demand it. The bishop can only be in one place at any one time! Cathedrals therefore sometimes need to be extended by their designated spheres of authority, authenticity, advocacy, and specialized activity, as ordered and deployed by episcopal (bishops’) signification. This is where *pro-cathedrals* become important, and sometimes necessary for the more effective work of the diocese.

In more recent times in the Episcopal Church, the pro-cathedral of the Incarnation in Baltimore was officially designated as the Cathedral of the Diocese in 1955. In the Diocese of Long Island (New York), a church in the Brooklyn area of that Diocese was designated as a pro-cathedral. Following is the story of that development in November 2017 from the Diocesan information services:

A cathedral is the principal church of a diocese. It contains the bishop’s seat (cathedra, in Latin), and is a place for diocesan celebrations and episcopal services. The Cathedral of the Incarnation in Garden City, New York, serves this role in the Episcopal Diocese of Long Island. Where a diocese already has a functioning cathedral, a pro-cathedral may be named. On November 11, 2017, at the 151st Convention of the Diocese of Long Island, the Rt. Rev. Lawrence Provenzano, announced his intention to designate St. Ann & the Holy Trinity Church in Brooklyn Heights as pro-cathedral at a service of Evensong on September 16, 2018, and did so in a special service preceded by a joyous procession.

While serving as diocesan pro-cathedral, St. Ann & the Holy Trinity Church holds a bishop’s seat and provides a location for special diocesan events in the densely populated western part of the diocese within the bounds of the City of New York. The church remains under the control of its rector and vestry, and its status as pro-cathedral continues only through the tenure of Bishop Provenzano. Pro-cathedral status may be extended by the next bishop.

From the perspective of history, St. Ann & the Holy Trinity comes naturally to pro-cathedral status. A pro-cathedral is most commonly the church that functions as the seat of a bishop until a cathedral has been erected. It was here in the former Church of the Holy Trinity that then rector, the Rev. Abram Newkirk Littlejohn, was elected the first Bishop of Long Island on November 19, 1868. This building was Bishop Littlejohn’s pro-cathedral from the time of his consecration on January 27, 1869, until the opening of the Cathedral of the Incarnation on April 9, 1885.

More than half a century later, on May 16, 1950, Bishop James P. DeWolfe announced to the 83rd convention of the Diocese of Long Island that he had accepted an offer by the vestry of St. Ann’s Church (then located on Clinton and Livingston Streets in Brooklyn Heights) to use the church for “diocesan purposes” in Brooklyn. In other words, he agreed that St. Ann’s would

serve as pro-cathedral. St. Ann's rector at the time, the Rev. Melville Harcourt, became "Rector and Bishop's Vicar" and an honorary Canon.

St. Ann's Church, the first Episcopal parish in Brooklyn, took up residence in the former Church of the Holy Trinity in 1969. The members of St. Ann & the Holy Trinity Church are honored to have our building serve as pro-cathedral for our bishop and the people of the Diocese of Long Island in a new season of ministry.

Trinity Church, Williamsport, is currently the Pro-Cathedral of the Diocese of Central Pennsylvania, Province III.

Pro-Cathedrals and Mission

It may well be asked what exactly is a Pro-Cathedral? In the Anglican tradition, a Pro-Cathedral is a church so named by a Diocesan Bishop. Such a church is under the governance of the Vestry and Provost/Rector. It is used as a "Cathedral" for diocesan purposes, but without the formation of a legal or canonical Cathedral organization, and devoid of a Cathedral chapter. As such, a Pro-Cathedral is not the official Cathedral of the diocese. Trinity Cathedral in Easton is the official cathedral in the Diocese of Easton. However, from time to time, the Pro-Cathedral may be used for Diocesan Services in the particular section of the Diocese. It must be noted that a church's status as a Pro-Cathedral ends when the bishop no longer holds diocesan jurisdiction. The Pro-Cathedral status may or may not be extended by the next bishop.

Coupled with the upgrading of a Parish Church, is a change in Title for the Incumbent. The Rector of the Pro-Cathedral may then be designated as Rector and Provost. The designation of any sacred edifice as 'Pro-Cathedral' points to the fact that it is more than a glorified Parish Church. The Pro-Cathedral is expected to become a major center and corporate engine for renewal in Evangelism, Outreach, Liturgy and Mission, Christian Education, Ministerial and Missionary Development for the Diocese in its designated section of the Diocese. The Pro-Cathedral's space must be regarded as an oasis for study.

Pro-Cathedrals must become physical engines not only for the strengthening of Christian witness in the world, but also a prominent collective instrument for the promotion of Anglicanism as a major prophetic, pastoral, and practical protagonist and advocate for social justice, human equality, and compassionate service on the behalf of the poor and marginalized sectors of society. Above all, the Pro-Cathedral serves as the institutional extension of the

Mission and Vision of the Diocese, as well as the facilitation of the bishop's prioritization of his expressed values and initiatives for church growth, spiritual enrichment, pastoral guidance, and episcopal leadership.

What was noticeably obvious is the visible emergence of the City of Salisbury into a major city of considerable reputation, notoriety and renown in every sphere of community life, presence, population growth, economy and relevance. It is time the Diocese of Easton acknowledges and endorses this exciting and progressive development. The church reaffirms its historic role of over 250 years of missional service to the city. It is time to take a step further in contributing to this ever-growing and changing status. This initiative could be achieved by recognizing that historically and culturally our Anglican tradition has designated churches cathedrals to reflect the pioneering role of its missional call and to affirm the power and grace of God working to undergird this powerful movement of transformation under the aegis of the Holy Spirit. The spirit of optimism and missional focus of the Diocese of Easton and the resurrection, stability and prominence of St. Peter's Episcopal Church makes it strategically and missionally ready to be designated Pro-Cathedral of the Diocese of Easton.

The Pro-Cathedral for The Diocese of Easton

The story of the origins, developments, and growth challenges of the Diocese of Easton has been one of immense significance for the current membership and collective leadership in the diocese. This is so because of the several phases through which the diocese has had to navigate its mission and ministries over the past century-and-a-half, ranging from such debates and decisions surrounding separation, merger, or even cessation. The current climate, however, strongly suggests that The Diocese of Easton is determined to continue along a path of renewal, growth, fervent witness in worship, work, and witness, as well as creating fresh spaces for a new generation of membership and partnerships for Gospel action, and in inviting others into the joyful experiences of the Kingdom of God.

In other words, the diocese has been experiencing a new spirit and sense of vision, vitality, and values that clearly indicate that the Lord of the Church is calling for dynamic innovation, developmental explorations and experimentation, and creative extensions into the

vineyard of the special section of the State of Maryland. All of this is not surprising, since from its very inception, the Diocese of Easton had designated itself as a missionary diocese. The time is now ripe for it to become a ***Missional Diocese***, since there is no area diocesan jurisdiction that could still be regarded as “missionary” sectors. However, there is more than enough evidence that with the contemporary ethical, moral, social, political, strategic and relational challenges that have been painfully obvious all around, the missional work of the diocese is both critically urgent and vitally necessary. Notwithstanding, the church global in its present iteration is mission focus. The deployment of functions, programs, and personnel that would enable and enhance the mission and ministry of the bishop as Chief Pastor and Chief Evangelist, must also be accompanied by the diocese facilitating the bishop as Chief Missioner as well.

In this regard, therefore, the designation of an appropriate church that has access to the material, social, moral, and institutional capital could thus be designated as a pro-cathedral in the Diocese of Easton. In careful consultation with the competent leadership and authorities in the diocese, this designation could be determined and approved on the bishop’s recommendation, and an appropriate ceremony could be arranged to facilitate this change of status of the chosen church. The time is ideal for this designation. The harvest truly is plentiful. The Diocese of Easton is at the stage for new beginnings. May the Spirit of God guide the leadership and its membership into new spheres of Sanctity, Solidarity, and Service.

Added value to the parish:

- Additional financial obligation to the parish is – budget neutral
- Improve the ecclesiastical image and presence of the parish in the state and diocese
- Offers an official seat for the Bishop of Easton
- Act as a cathedral with all privileges, pomp and circumstance attributed to a cathedral in the Anglican Communion
- Recognizes and contributes to the emerging status of the church in the City of Salisbury noted as one of the numerically growing cities in the State of Maryland

Pro-Cathedral

“A church named by a diocesan bishop to serve as a cathedral, but which remains under the governance of the vestry and dean. It is used as a cathedral for diocesan purposes, but without the formation of a legal cathedral organization and without a cathedral chapter. It is not the official cathedral of the diocese. The church’s status as pro-cathedral ends when

the bishop no longer holds the diocesan jurisdiction, and the pro-cathedral's status may or may not be extended by the next bishop”.

- *[Glossary definitions provided courtesy of Church Publishing Incorporated, New York, NY, (All Rights reserved) from “An Episcopal Dictionary of the Church, A User-Friendly Reference for Episcopalians,” Don S. Armentrout and Robert Boak Slocum, editors.]*