



Diocese of Easton
God's Call! God's Hope!
God's 'Little Gem' on Maryland's Eastern Shore
Season of Gratitude

The month of October has been designated Diocesan Heritage month. To further contribute to the effort in preserving Diocesan Heritage, I have begun a series of research to promote and preserve the legacy and sacred trust placed on us by the sacrifice and foresight of the early forebearers of the wider church and diocese.

To this end, I wish to share with you some bullet points that I feel are key to understanding the importance and value of what I have come to know as “God’s Little Gem on Maryland’s Eastern Shore” – our Diocese of Easton. This document was compiled with love and a desire for our membership to gain a deeper knowledge of the legacy to which they are an integral part. The following information is intended for educational and informational purposes. It demonstrates one of the historic and canonical roles of the bishop as teacher of the faith. In my five years in the diocese, I have discovered how much the Roles, Functions, scope, importance and ministry of Diocese and by extension Bishop are misunderstood, diminished, disrespected and misrepresented. Much of this I have come to discern is attributed to lack of information and education of lay and clergy. Education and information serve as instruments and antidotes to expel the notion of disinformation. The Anglican/Episcopal Church and the diocese and the bishop/clergy do not function in the model of ministry and leadership as a secular corporation, neither do they function similar to any other faith denomination in the world. We are the church of the *Via Media or Middle Way neither catholic nor protestant/reformed*. We are part of a *synodical body* meaning lay, clergy and bishop gather to take counsel of the church. We are members of a hierarchical church organized around the bishop or ordinary or ecclesiastical authority. In the vacancy of a bishop, the Standing Committee acts as the ecclesiastical authority (Article IV) acting within canonically defined function.

In the spirit of proper governance, there is a delineation of responsibilities, roles and functions within each of the three orders, lay, clergy and bishop, that give rise to effective governance.

I have undertaken to conduct a series of research to be shared not only of the diocese and/or episcopate, but the Anglican/Episcopal faith and polity. These teaching moments will be posted on the diocesan website for reference. As bishop, I am directing and encouraging clergy and lay leadership to ensure these teaching series are adequately distributed and explained, especially when conducting formation forums. This information will be uploaded on the diocese's website.

SEE: Related article by Bishop Henry Parsley on [What is a Diocese For?](#)

SEE: Slide deck (powerpoint) that can be accessed by [clicking here](#).

Development or Evolution of the Episcopal Church

□ The First Bishop, Samuel Seabury, was elected and consecrated by Scottish bishops.

By the year 1787, the Church in America, had been organized, and had secured the episcopal succession in the English line or Apostolic succession. The English line was in succession to the Apostolic heritage of St. James, brother of our Lord who scripture notes as the spiritual leader/bishop of the early eastern orthodox church (Acts 15) and St. Peter, the first bishop of the western Church (see below).

The First Bishop, Samuel Seabury, was elected in 1783 and consecrated Bishop of Connecticut in Aberdeen, Scotland – Scottish bishops consecrated him on November 14, 1784. The bishops of Scotland line of succession were derived from the line of English bishops whose line of succession was derived from the See of Rome. The *Oath of Supremacy prevented Seabury consecration in the Church of England. The Scottish bishops consented to ordain and consecrate Bishop Seabury on a matter of ecclesiastical conscience, whereby, it would have been unthinkable, unfathomable, and unpatriotic for an American citizen/bishop to swear the Oath of Supremacy/Allegiance to the Monarch of England after the Revolutionary War of Independence. By the time the Episcopal Church petitioned for recognition as a bona fide/free-standing church within the Anglican Communion and ordination and consecration of its first bishop, it had to develop its own unique Constitution and Canons in conformity with the standard and sensibility of the Church of England Constitution and Canons. Although the contents in its C & C addressed concerns of the church in USA context, the structure had to follow a unified order set forth by the communion.

Bishop Seabury was unequivocal and resolute in his determination to maintain his apostolic lineage/line to the Holy See of Rome or Apostolic See (First Bishop & Great Apostle Peter). By this act all subsequent bishops and correspondingly priests/clergy ordained by bishops have their apostolic lineage to the Apostle Peter and by extension to Jesus, who consecrated Peter the 'Rock' on which Jesus' 'Church is to be built'. Also, no valid Ordination and Consecration in the Anglican Communion could be done without the presence of three (3) bishops with

apostolic lineage to the Apostle Peter reflecting the essence of the Triune God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit). The Presiding Bishop, the Most Reverend Michael Curry, travelled to Scotland a few years ago to share in the 500-year anniversary observances of the establishment of the Scottish Episcopal Church. The Scottish Church severed official ties with the Church of England over 500 years ago. By his attendance, Bishop Curry represented the Episcopal Church's solidarity and recognition of its undeniable roots in that Church. This act by the Scottish Protestant Church meant at least three (3) bishops with lineage to the See of Rome administered the official act that would allow Bishop Seabury and consequently all bishops and clergy ordained in this church to claim their apostolic line in the Early Church. The present episcopal incumbent of the Diocese of Easton was ordained and consecrated bishop in the Province of the Indian Ocean. The Diocese of Seychelles is in full communion with the Churches of the global Anglican Communion including the Episcopal Church. This historic relationship and in the spirit of the 'bonds of affection' permitted Bishop San's translation to the Episcopal Church or any church of the worldwide Anglican Communion.

- **Bishop Samuel Seabury was the First Anglican/Episcopal bishop appointed to minister outside of the British Isles.**
- **Bishop Seabury ordained Reverend Colin Ferguson, sometime rector of St. Paul's Parish, Kent. Rev. Ferguson was the first priest ordained by Bishop Seabury after his consecration.**
 - o **Our diocese, in the early stages of the formation of the Episcopal Church, was already playing a significant role in the wider church.**

Bishop Samuel Seabury was the First Anglican/Episcopal bishop appointed to minister outside the British Isles. Bishop Seabury ordained Reverend Colin Ferguson, sometime rector of St. Paul's Parish, Kent. Fr. Ferguson was the first priest to be ordained by Bishop Seabury. This priest served as Rector, St. Paul's Parish, Kent, one of our northern convocation parishes (1785-1799). This is of historic note to the Diocese of Easton because it reveals that our diocese, in the early stages of the formation of the Episcopal Church, was already playing a significant role in the wider church.

- **It is significant that Bishop Seabury sought consecration in a church of the Anglican Communion.**
 - o **Maintained the character & integrity of our Anglican heritage and historic tradition of Anglicanism**
 - o **Our ROOTS/IDENTITY remain, to this day, in the headship of Jesus and his Apostolic Succession.**

The early fathers and architects of this church were free to do whatever they saw fit and proper for the common good and well-being of the church. As such the early lay and clergy pioneers (no indigenous or American born/local bishop was ordained and consecrated in the US church

at this time) could have chosen to align the church with any protestant denomination in the new nation of the USA. However, they chose to remain committed to the ecclesiastical ideals, character, polity/governance, worship, doctrine and discipline and overall structure of Anglicanism's ethos/framework.

This decision not only maintained the character & integrity of our Anglicanism, but also means that our ROOTS/IDENTITY lay in the headship of Jesus and his Apostolic Succession. All bishops and priests of this church claim their line of succession and authority from the First Bishop of Rome – the Chief Apostle St. Peter and Christ's Chief Shepherd.

By 1785, the Oath of Supremacy was suspended from the rite of ordination for bishops of this church. As such the next two bishops – William White of Pennsylvania & Samuel Provost of New York, were ordained and consecrated in the Church of England on February 4, 1787. The service was held in Lambeth Chapel, Lambeth Palace, England. The Right Reverend Dr. John Moore, Archbishop of Canterbury; the Right Reverend Dr. William Markham, Archbishop of York; the Right Reverend Dr. Charles Moss, Bishop of Bath and Wells. The Right Reverend Dr. John Hincliff, Bishop of Peterborough was present and assisting. (*Bishop San was honored to have on several occasions worshipped and received Holy Communion in Lambeth Chapel when he served as commissary to the Anglican Communion under the Most Reverend Dr. Rowan Williams, former Archbishop of Canterbury*). Of special note likewise, the Right Reverend Dr. James Madison, Bishop of Virginia was ordained and consecrated by English bishops in the era after independence. He was ordained and consecrated (1790-1812) as the fourth bishop of the Episcopal Church.

- Thomas John Claggett of Maryland, fifth bishop in the Episcopal Church and first to be consecrated on US soil on the 17th September 1792. He was elevated to the Office of Bishop at a time when there were four bishops. He was ordained and consecrated on US soil because, again, by then, although three (3) bishops were required, there were now four (4) US bishops with line of succession to the English bishops and Holy See of Rome, present for his elevation to the episcopate. The Diocese of Maryland was officially established, and Bishop Claggett became its first bishop.
- **Thomas John Claggett of Maryland, fifth bishop in the Episcopal Church and first to be consecrated on US soil. The consecration was presided over by Bishops Seabury, White, Provost and Madison.**

+ *The Office of Bishop is ordered by three (3) fundamental or overarching ecclesiological principles: (1) biblical foundation; it is an office deeply embedded in biblical and doctrinal Truths of the Church designed and authorized by God in Christ and wisdom of early and subsequent church councils; (2) Ordinal of the Ordination and Consecration of Bishop (BCP p. 512-523). Bishops pledge vows to guard the faith or worship, unity or doctrine and*

discipline or canons of the church, and (3) historic episcopate (one of the four historic articles agreed on by Resolution 11 of Lambeth Conference 1888. Documents detailing the ordering of life, mission/ministry and ecclesiology governing the manner of the office bishops including her/his life are set forth in Ministry of Bishop¹. These are historic orderings that date back to the early period and informed by the ongoing evolution of the office as guided by Holy Spirit and wisdom and counsel of the Church over time. The 21st century inclusion that I may add to the aforementioned admonitions are- “bishops prepare the people of God for the mission of God”.

When I was elected, called ordained and consecrated to the See of Seychelles as Bishop in April, 2005, my diocesan bishop, Bishop John Howard, Diocese of Florida, presented to me his personal signed copy of “ON BEING A BISHOP”. The authors namely the Episcopal participants to this document were to focus on “the three pastoral roles or functions which are vital to the office of bishop but are sometimes misunderstood or neglected today.” 1. The Bishop as Proclaimer of the Gospel and Teacher of the Christian Faith; 2. The Bishop as Provider of and Presider over the Sacraments (Baptism and Eucharist), and 3. The Bishop as leader in the Councils of the Church, local, national and supra-national.

The Genesis of the Diocese of Easton

- **The Diocese of Easton was established by resolution of Diocese of Maryland in 1865 but did not receive diocesan status until 1868 when its first bishop, Bishop Henry C. Lay, was elected.**
 - **No diocese could be formed/established in the Anglican/Episcopal Communion without a BISHOP in office – the word *EPISCOPAL* is synonymous with *BISHOP*.**

Diocese of Easton was established by resolution of Diocese of Maryland in 1865 & officially formed as an independent or free-standing diocese in 1868. Of note, in 2021 our diocese celebrates its 153rd Anniversary. The diocese took three (3) years to call its first bishop. The reason is a subject for another discussion. However, the elected bishops declined to take up the office. Finally, Bishop Henry C. Lay, Missionary Bishop of Arkansas who served as sometime rector of Nativity Episcopal Church, Huntsville, Diocese of Alabama, was elected bishop in 1868 and accepted the call, which meant the diocese could receive its diocesan status.

¹ J. Robert Wright, Ed., *On Being a Bishop: Papers on Episcopacy from the Moscow Consultation 1992* (Church Hymnal Corporation, New York, NY)

In our polity/ecclesiology - dioceses are founded under a bishop or ecclesiastical authority. Hence, there isn't an official diocese without a bishop.

The Continuing Value of Bishop & Diocese

- **Called to be the Symbol of Christ** - Bishop's role is far weightier than just "figurehead" for people in a diocese. She/he is God's under shepherd in Christ who remains the Great Shepherd.
 - *The ministry of a bishop is to represent Christ and his Church, particularly as apostle, chief priest, and spiritual pastor of a diocese; to guard the faith, unity, and discipline of the whole Church; to proclaim the Word of God; to act in Christ's name for the reconciliation of the world and the building up of the Church; and to ordain others to continue Christ's ministry.* (Book of Common Prayer - page 855)
- **Global Community** - The Bishop is called to be the symbol of Christ, unifying the church, and connecting the people of God with the wider church and worldwide Anglican Communion. The wider church recognizes these historic standards as divinely and ecclesiastically conforming to the requisite fundamentals of a globally recognized church.
- **Representation** - Bishops, clergy and lay gather to debate, counsel, share ideas, fellowship, worship and arise at decisions that affect the life, mission and ministry of the church in its jurisdiction.
 - *Bishops serve in concert with the councils of the church comprised of Clergy and Lay. This is a synodical church meaning bishops, clergy and lay gather to debate, counsel, share ideas, fellowship, worship and arise at decisions that affect the life, mission and ministry of the church in its jurisdiction. It equally pays particular attention to what is transpiring in the wider church as it does so. This helps the church maintain solidarity with episcopal churches through the General Convention.*
- **Apostolic Identity** – to be a church in communion with the early church and first bishop & apostles (Acts of Apostles) as detailed in the points above.
- **Branding** - Parishes receive their "brand name", *Episcopal Church*, through its affiliation with the diocese. "The Episcopal Church Welcomes You"
- **Councils & Commissions** - The councils of this church cannot function indefinitely without the active presence of a bishop.
- **Lay Empowerment** - to preserve, form, and encourage ministers in the lay order.

- **Stewards** - Protect, preserve and hold in Posterity that which was entrusted to succeeding generations as guardians and stewards of history and mission.
- **Clergy Search** – Diocese & Bishop provide framework and guidance (bishops do ‘red flag checks on clergy applying for any position in their diocese). Clergy are able to serve a diocese only with a license from the bishop. Clergy coming into the diocese to officiate also require permission of the bishop. Any clergy who takes up parish position/responsibility does so with the consent and permission of the ordinary/bishop. To disrespect this understanding is a violation of their ordination vows, virtue of common decency and ecclesiastical courtesy.
 - *(The Episcopal Church Constitution and Canons) outlines that every clergy functions by ecclesiastical license from the bishop of the diocese, under ecclesiastical discipline - the bishop, similarly, is under episcopal discipline of the Presiding Bishop. No clergy is permitted to serve in a diocese without the permission of the ordinary. Retired non-parochial clergy serve at the pastoral discretion or grace of the incumbent ecclesiastical authority or bishop of the diocese. The Standing Committee is the Council of Advice to the ecclesiastical authority/bishop and acts in roles reserved for it as specified in Article IV of the Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church and Article IX of C & C of DoE. There are other significant canonical functions specified by the said C & C of TEC and C & C of DoE. Its role is amplified in the vacancy of a ‘See’ or ‘Bishop’. Diocesan Convention with the bishop as president is the governing body of the diocese (Article X & Canon 102) C & C DoE. Diocesan Council acts as convention out of session modeling the function of General Convention and Executive Council of TEC. In this diocese the Standing Committee has erroneously misinterpreted its role as the governing body which is unconstitutional and an overstepping of its canonical function as specified in C & C, DoE.*
- **Quality Clergy Formation & Networking**
- **Church Pension Fund** - Offer Clergy & Lay Pension/Insurance by being a member of the DOE (Diocese of Easton). Only Episcopal Churches are permitted to contribute to this system
- **Church Insurance** – Property & Liability Protection (the aforementioned principle applies here as well). The DOE has historic buildings well over 350 years old that secular companies will not insure. The DOE has over 150 million in real estate insured by Church Insurance Property - historically dated buildings and furnishings. The Diocese also has access to national disaster preparedness and response assistance/models. Parishes have access to Episcopal Relief & Development disaster resources
- Easton Episcopal Fund (EEF) through Board of Managers (BOM) manages the investments/portfolios of over 30 parishes/shareholders totaling over 37 million
- **DOE Parishes** – Investments and Liquid Assets protected by diocese

- **Camp Wright, Retreat House and other Conference Centers are ministry entities that serve under and on behalf of the Diocese of Easton and benefit from their affiliation with the diocese**
- **Safeguarding Program** - which allows for “Peace of Mind” to fulfil mission & ministry. The diocese retains attorneys and insurance and provides council for Title 4 and other matters.
- **So Much More...** the body of Christ that is made possible through the network of Diocesan churches, people, and organizations - offers myriad advantages, not all of which are included in this list.

One Body, Many Parts – We Need Each Other

- No Episcopal Parish is allowed to function without being part of the Diocese and its bishop in council.
- The Diocese of Easton spent two (2) years in discernment that led to the decision to call its 11th bishop (as opposed to being absorbed by a neighboring Diocese – existing without a Diocese is not possible).
- Parishes voted unequivocally at the 2015 Diocesan Convention to pledge their financial support to cover the financial cost of maintaining the Office of Bishop and keep the diocese as a viable independent self-governing church
- The Diocese of Easton, in turn, contributes over 120K annually to the National Episcopal Church Budget from our annual budget plus personnel to populate governing structures of the wider church
- Christian integrity obliges parishes and diocese to fulfill as far as possible this pledge of canonical obligation and symbiotic relationship.
- What is outlined here is the standard ecclesiology of every diocese in the global Anglican/Episcopal Communion without exception.
 - o *Churches that choose to function within this historic model exhibit healthy signs of collaboration and respect for long standing seeds Anglican/Episcopal compliance with the worship, doctrine, and discipline of the church and the Anglican/Episcopal ‘bonds of affection’. They share in the privileges and benefits the Anglican/Episcopal Communion provides, as listed above, for its member churches. It could be interpreted as honoring and celebrating its ‘brand name’ as an Episcopal Church and its place in the global church community. And it is embracing the opportunity to share in this walk with God, in designing God’s church for the eastern shore’s jurisdiction/brand of the Episcopal Church.*

Although we may not always agree, our ability to remain at the table together (throughout our history) has been a paradigm of commitment and dedication, reconciliation, and unconditional love. The essence of this embodiment as a Diocese honors Christ's own example. Jesus chose 12 disciples, and each was diametrically opposite to the other; he knew each one's heart and thought process, yet loved them and ensure they walk together in the 'bond of unity, affection and fellowship'.

I thank you all for your continued commitment to all that God is doing on this beloved Eastern Shore of Maryland and in the Episcopal Church nationally and abroad. And I renew my question to you,

What kind of diocese is God calling the Diocese of Easton to live into as a people of God?

The early seed of Anglicanism was planted by Augustine of Canterbury in the 6th century. He was a Benedictine monk who became the first Archbishop of Canterbury in 597. As Prior of a Benedictine monastery in Rome, he was sent by Pope Gregory the Great in 595 with the missionary call and mandate to evangelize Anglo-Saxon Britain to Christianity. Augustine is referred to as the "Apostle to the English" and founder of the English Church. His legacy and line of succession is rooted in Rome and in the first bishop, the Great Apostle Peter. This understanding eliminates and reverses any historical notion that Anglicanism began with a despotic, immoral, serial murderer and oppressor of women, namely King Henry VIII (1491-1547). Ours is a faith of much nobler distinction, more honorable and dedicated to the vision and principles of God's mission and transformation of 'souls' for Christ. The Book of Common Prayer (BCP), Archbishop Thomas Cranmer (1489-1556) masterpiece, was designed around the principle of Benedictine Spiritual Order because of Augustine's influence on this church. All bishops, priests, deacons and lay people in this church locate their second birth (spiritual birth: see John 3 - Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus) through baptism and ordination tracing back to the first bishop. Beloved, each of us has power – the power that comes from living in Christ and living through Jesus. Anglicanism is neither catholic nor protestant/reformed; it's the *via media* or *in-between* church, hence, we have churches that exhibit a wide spectrum of worship sensibilities. The *Holy Bible* and *Book of Common Prayer* are the two primary sources of Anglicanism. The two (2) principal sacraments are *Baptism & Holy Communion*.

We model our theology or faith-understanding through the lens of a 'three-legged stool'-Scripture, Reason and Tradition (Richard Hooker- 1554-1600).

The best analogy to describe the diocese is a that of an ocean-going freight ship with myriad containers. The safety of the containers on board depends on the stability and enduring quality of the ship protecting its cargo. In order for the ship to maintain its mission it needs to be serviced, thus retaining its seaworthiness, or risk going under and its cargo perish. This is also similar to a mother caring for and protecting her children, the children are free to explore life because they know that they are under-girded by a loving, caring and protective mother. The diocese is your seaworthy vessel, and its durability depends on each of our support. Churches of this diocese pursue God's mission in the governing security and protection offered by their diocese.

Reference Sources:

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- Constitution and Canons of the Diocese of Easton 2021
- On Being a Bishop: Papers on Episcopacy from the Moscow Consultation 1992: Edited by Professor J. Robert Wright
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- Wikipedia
- A Sketch of the Beginnings of the Church in the United States
- Being Episcopalian
- Study in Anglican Spirituality

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Feast of the Epiphany of our Lord
January 2022