



The 132nd Annual Council

February 10, 2024

Address to Council by the Rt. Rev. Susan B. Haynes

“What You Have Is Enough...for a Miracle!”

Dear God. Listen to what Your Church has to say: **We are out of wine.** Our strength is declining. We are at a loss to continue to sustain ourselves. We long for the days when we could make merry and celebrate. We remember a time when our force was greater, when our numbers were more, and when we seemed to have enough money. Even if all of that were not entirely true (because we recognize that nostalgia can incorrectly color reality), we remember a former time when we seemed vibrant and powerful. But now we are not. The fuel which we depend on is now depleted. If you had been paying attention to your mother, you would have heard her say about us, “They have no more wine.” And even if now you don’t think this is the time to restore things, we are here to tell you, “Lord Jesus, your Church has run out of wine.” We are ready to do whatever you say.

Weddings are a time of celebration. Lord Jesus Christ, you know personally how important weddings were to the people of your day. Their lives were hard...grinding days of tedium and monotony. A wedding was the high point of the year...something that your people looked forward to for weeks and months. Weddings were a time for feasting and drinking, and hosts knew better than to keep wine in short supply. We remember that you were at a wedding once when they ran out of wine. Perhaps the host didn’t plan well enough; perhaps the guests drank more than that host intended...and yet the fact remained that the wedding was only half over and the wine was gone. The host was powerless to rectify the situation. But your mother knew you well enough to know that you, the Son of God, were not powerless. She could push you to do something.

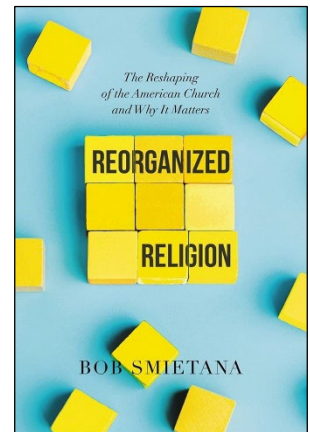
And what did you do? You looked around to see what there was. And you saw the empty jars that hold water for the Jewish Rites of Purification. You saw implements of worship, important implements of worship; and you pressed them into duty to meet the oncoming crisis. Now these jars were empty, and they had to be filled with something. Water is a precious thing...at least in Israel it was and still is. But you knew these people had water and so you



commanded them to fill the jars with what they had. So the wedding host, who had run out of wine, had something to put in the jars. Now water isn't wine. We all know that. But it's what they had, and they did what you told them to do. They filled the jars with what they had. **And that's all they had to do. All they had to do was what you commanded – fill the jars with water, the thing that they had.** You did the rest, Lord Christ. You did the transformation. You changed the water to wine, a fore-visioning of your blood...your blood that saves the world. And in that, your glory was revealed. Well now, Jesus, your Church is out of wine, and we need your transforming, life-giving blood in order to survive. Please tell us what to do and we will do it. The Church, and in fact the whole world, needs your glory revealed.

We know that you know, but can we tell you a little bit about how we see that the wine has run out? In his book, *Reorganized Religion: The Reshaping of the American Church and Why It Matters*, Bob Smietana summarizes the empty jars of the Church that we might offer:

- Census Bureau: in 1960 in America 89% of the population was white, 10% was black, and less than 1% was of other ethnic origins.
- We all know that is changing and the Census Bureau predicts that by 2060, 100 years later, whites will make up 43% of the population, Hispanics 28%, Blacks 15%, and Asian Americans 9%.
- What this means is that in our church populations today older Christians are predominantly white and outnumber people of color 5 to 1. But in the younger church population groups of white Christians and groups of people of color are more equally balanced. ***This means that Christians in general are becoming a more diverse group.***
- **The Silent Generation: people born from 1928 to 1945 (ages 79-96):** 84% of them identify as Christian and attend church once a week or more.
- **Millennials:** Only 49% identify as Christian and only 22% even go to church. 40% of this group claims to have no religion.
- **What does this mean for congregations and faith communities all over our diocese who are lamenting the lack of younger people among them?** Lord Jesus, just as you commanded the empty stone jars to be brought forward and to be filled with what your people had, what would you command us to do? What do we have lying around that you can use for our transformation? What empty jars do we have? What do we have to fill them with? Could it be that the population we have around us, which is becoming more and more diverse, means that we must fill the jars with those people? Could it be that what we have around us is more and more people who are different from us? What would filling the jars with them challenge us to do?



- What else do we have to put in the jars? Let's talk about attendance and money. (Graphics by The Rev. Molly F. James, Deputy Executive Officer of General Convention)

Changes in Plate and Pledge Revenue



Membership Overall – while declining (blue), and while ASA is declining (gray), plate and pledge revenue (yellow/green) is remaining solid or rising. Fewer members are giving more.



Sacramental Trends which show that the membership is declining.

 Sacramental Trends, 1980 - 2022			
Year	Baptisms	Marriages	Burials
1980	64,367 children 8,611 adults	39,862	50,070
2000	49,904 children 7,259 adults	24,054	40,117
2019* (pre-Covid)	19,716 children 3,866 adults	6,484	26,667
2022	15,272 children 2,147 adults	5,562	25,905

Clergy Trends: shows shift to part-time/**Bi-vocational**.

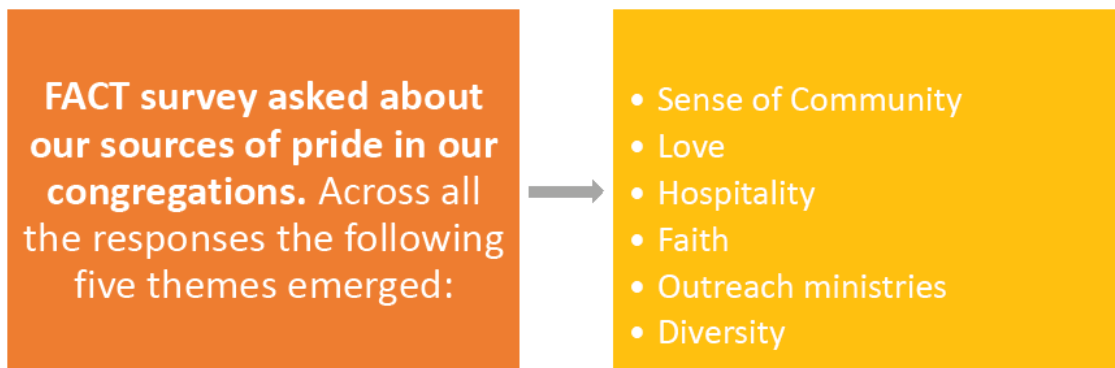
 Clergy Trends	
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- 18% of our congregations have multiple clergy on staff
- 12% (or just over 800) of our congregations are served by a priest who is either retired or not active in the Pension Fund
- In 2022, 54% of our clergy are listed as part-time on the parochial report
- In 2010 that number was 26%

So, Lord Jesus, while our church buildings may seem like empty jars with members that don't fill them to the brim, we do have good solid people coming who continue to love your church passionately. Don't you want us to put **THEM** into the jars? And these people seem to have some financial, material, and human resources that we can continue to count on. And we still have our Sacraments and our worship. We might be administering fewer Sacraments, but we believe that those Sacraments are changing

the world; and we would like to put them into the jars that stand before you. And we have our priests...all of them...those who want to work fulltime as priests and those who are called to bi-vocational ministry. All of these are longing to jump into the empty jars to await your transformation.

And while we're at it, Lord Christ, we have some **sources of pride**...and we toss those sources into the empty jars as well:



- Sense of Community
- Love
- Hospitality
- Faith
- Outreach
- Ministries (Including Our Sacraments)
- Diversity

Resources are financial, material, and human. These are opportunities for Transformation.

Lord Jesus, help us to remember, as it happened at that wedding in Cana, that all we must do is fill the jars with what we have. You will do the rest, just as you did then. You will take it all and transform it into that which sustains, into that which gives life. We might be out of wine, but we are not out of **YOU**; and neither are we out of your sustaining, life-transforming grace.

Even now, Lord Jesus, we can see signs of your transformation. In our churches, faith communities, and gathering places in our diocese, we can see the beginning of water turned to wine.

We were thrilled to welcome Presiding Bishop Michael Curry and his staff here for Revival in the Spring. This was an extraordinary gift to us, particularly given the decline of Bishop Curry's health over the summer. His preaching and time spent with us were a boost to many of us in our spiritual lives and in our life together as a diocese. Throughout the year we continued to learn together and pray together as we engaged in book studies and other formational opportunities. Many of us gathered for Cursillo weekends as we learned how to fashion a Rule of Life. More and more young people are coming to Cursillo. On Advent 1, we gathered as a diocese in retreat to prepare for the coming of the Savior – at Christmas and in our daily lives. We want to make it clear that we are filling our jars with a hunger for you.

We are aware that as baby boomer clergy retire, we are facing challenges in finding clergy to fill vacant cures. But your people love your churches, Lord Christ; and lay people are expressing a desire to be trained more and more as preachers, administrators, healers, and pastoral caregivers. As a result in several congregations, rooted ministry is taking place where lay leaders partner with clergy to help smaller churches stay open when they might otherwise have closed. In the Fall of this year, I participated in a Bishop's Collaborative at Virginia Theological Seminary on rooted ministry. During these days at VTS, I listened to young people – millennials and people from Generations X, Y, and Z – talk about their hope for the Church and their desire to see it thrive. From that collaborative, I came away with a deep conviction that the church will live and live vibrantly. It may not be the Church that I know today, but it will be your Church, Lord Jesus, transformed and enlivened for your purposes. Likewise, in those rare moments this summer, when I was able to be with staff and campers at Camp Chanco, I heard of the younger generation's interest in being engaged with a Church that is reaching out to a hurting world. I have confidence in these young people and thank you Lord for enlivening them. In December of last year, we concluded the first two-year cycle of our Diocesan Congregational Development Institute. So far nine parishes have participated, and we graduated 16 participants who are even now conducting projects in their parishes and faith communities that are transforming them for the wider church. We are beginning to taste your amazing wine, Lord Jesus!

Into the empty jars, Lord Jesus, we are pouring our efforts at racial reconciliation. The Episcopal Church has invited us onto the journey of Becoming Beloved Community, and we as a diocese have embarked on that journey. Many of us have completed the Sacred Ground Curriculum and have expanded our education through book groups and

prayerful conversations. As leaders in our congregations and in the diocese, we have participated in Racial Healing Workshops, taking the necessary time to devote to this education. As you will hear later, we have done the work of developing our own statement acknowledging those who occupied these lands prior to the arrival of European settlers. And we are trying to live true to our Baptismal promise to reach out to the lost and unloved. Countless faith communities and parishes are extending their outreach beyond their doors. You will hear of two of them today in the work of Dos Santos on the Eastern Shore and Mission of the Holy Spirit in Norfolk. We acknowledge the work of others in addition to these two who add a spirited effervescence to this wine of transformation.

In the past year, we erected and set in motion the work of our Creation Care Team who is joining with parishes to launch creation care initiatives. We are grateful to all who are responding to this work. In the care of our diocesan resources, we have been careful to establish a balanced budget and to avoid having to draw from our reserves. As we receive diocesan pledges, we are grateful to notice that the trend in giving is going upwards. More and more parishes are increasing their percentage of giving to the diocese. Any increase in percentage of giving will fill the jars and help us close the gaps. We are grateful for that trust and for the gifts of faith that come our way.

Another thing we might put into those jars, Lord Jesus, is our work of evangelism. Even though Episcopalians are uncomfortable with that word, we made some progress last year. During our DCDI weekends and through some of our formational opportunities, we have practiced sharing our faith stories. Through the work of our youth missionary and college chaplains we are revitalizing our campus ministries. Currently we have ministries at William & Mary, Old Dominion University, Christopher Newport University, and Hampden-Sydney College and Longwood University. We are also making efforts to engage ministries at Norfolk State University. And in Lawrenceville, we are continuing our efforts to assist St. Paul's College for Life as they facilitate the rebirth of St. Paul's College. To assist us in our efforts at evangelism, both within the church and beyond, we have hired a Director of Communications. Please join me in welcoming Patsy Martin who started with us on February 1, is now in her tenth day of employment, and is fully engaged in the work of Annual Council. If she survives this, then she is a keeper, isn't she?



And finally, Jesus, we have one final thing to put in the jars. We have a vision – a vision of what your Church can look like in this diocese. The vision goes something

VISION STATEMENT



**We are a healthy, connected,
diocese equipped to proclaim
the Gospel.**

like this: *We are a healthy, connected, diocese equipped to proclaim the Gospel.* It's a simple statement but one that we believe in. You'll notice that we say we are this right now...not that we're becoming it or that we hope to become it. Yes, we know that there are parts of us that aren't healthy. And yes, we know that there are parts that are disconnected and fractured. And yes, we know that as a Church that has run out of wine, we might not currently be so equipped to proclaim the Gospel as we would like. But we believe, Lord Jesus. We believe in your transformative power, so even in our brokenness, we want to hold on to the reality of our wholeness: We are a healthy connected diocese equipped to proclaim the Gospel!

Lord God, you remind us in the Book of Deuteronomy that you provided for the Israelites during the 40 years that they wandered. Verse 5 of the 29th chapter says, "During the forty years that I led you through the wilderness, your clothes did not wear out, nor did the sandals on your feet...I did this so that you might know that I am the LORD your God." Many of you remember during my first Annual Council address, I



introduced you to my Holy Spirit shoes which my niece made for my Consecration. I invited you to join me in putting on running shoes to do the work to which we are called. I counted on those shoes not to wear out. This was prior to Jackie. Jackie is a Pet Refuge dog that my daughter Rebecca (who lives with us) invited to come into our home. Jackie has anxiety issues and likes to chew on things. Of all the shoes in my closet, Jackie chose the Holy Spirit to calm her anxiety. At first, I was a little miffed that God had not seen fit to promise me what He promised the Israelites. But then I realized that the Israelites did not have Jackie wandering around the wilderness with them. And after all, the shoes



are still not worn out. They're still wearable. In fact, I'm wearing them today. I invite you once again...all of us...to put on our running shoes and jump into the jars, along with everything else, so that God can transform us into life-giving wine.





Oh yes, Lord Jesus! We have a lot to put into the jars. We want them to be brimming over. And now deploy your servants. Teach us how to draw out of these jars and take this life-giving, sustaining, enlivening wine out into the world. Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "Faith is taking the first step even when you don't see the whole staircase." We want to be those faithful people, stepping away from those jars with our ladles full. We can't see where we're going, and we can only imagine right now the complete transformation that you have in mind for us. But we know that it is an abundant transformation, pressed down and flowing over. Your people want to receive your wine, Lord Jesus! Tell us what to do!