

The Bishop's Address Committee's Report  
The 47<sup>th</sup> Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Alaska  
September 29-October 1, 2022  
Anchorage, Alaska

The past couple of years of the pandemic have brought about a lot of changes in our lives – changes we didn't ask for, changes we didn't plan for, and changes we didn't want. We all jumped in and responded to all the changes, one after another. We've suffered many losses over the past couple of years. We have been laboring long and hard trying with all our might to help things get back to “normal”. This time of so much uncertainty and unrest has left us exhausted and worried about the future of our churches.

But, Jesus, has some words of comfort and hope to offer us, in a time such as this:

*Jesus said, Come to me, all who labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. Matthew 11:28-30*

We were reminded by Bishop Mark, that when times turn difficult, it's time to turn to Jesus – to bring our weariness, our worries, and ask for the weight of these burdens to be lifted from our hearts and our shoulders, and to pray for healing.

Bishop Mark told us, that there is power in prayer, and it's *an important element in what it means to be resilient. And right now, he says, we need resilience.* But, not the kind of resilience he learned about in many books he read during the pandemic...the kind of resilience that spoke about *strategies to bounce back from adversity, and a to return to a “normal life”*; or in our churches, we understand that as back to full pews, in-person worship, overflowing Sunday school classes, new members...going back to the way things were before the pandemic.

Bishop Mark was introduced to a new book (called *Building Resilience: When There's no Going Back to the Way Things Were*, written by Alice Updike Scannell) that Canon Stephanie Spellers gave to him, which offers a completely different look at what resilience looks like. The author uses a term called “*radical resilience*” to describe the resilience needed “not to bounce back from, but to work through the adversities that change our lives, the adversities that deliver a new reality in which we must make a new life.”

To make a new life, we are called to turn our hearts back to Jesus, to lay our burdens and our worries at his feet, to find rest and healing for our bodies, minds and spirits...It's time for all of us, to recommit ourselves, to *living a "Jesus-shaped life;" to making disciples who live the faith and hope of Jesus in such a way that they become an invitation to a new life that is consistent with His way of love.*

Jesus' great commission inspires in us to: *Be disciples and make disciples.*

Bishop Mark called our attention to the "The Five Marks of Mission", that have been around since 1984... It's a framework that can help us spiritually grow in our faith and renew our commitment to be disciples and make disciples, in this time, in this new reality, in this new life we are seeking to build together...as the people of God, the Church of God, the body of Christ...

Those 5 marks of mission, the mission of Christ are:

1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
2. To teach, baptize and nurture disciples
3. To respond to human need by loving service
4. To transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation
5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth, and to be good stewards of all God's gifts.

*Therefore, Bishop Mark is calling on all Episcopalians in Alaska and all Episcopal communities and congregations in the Diocese of Alaska to renewal and growth in discipleship through the Five Marks of Mission. Specifically, he calls us to:*



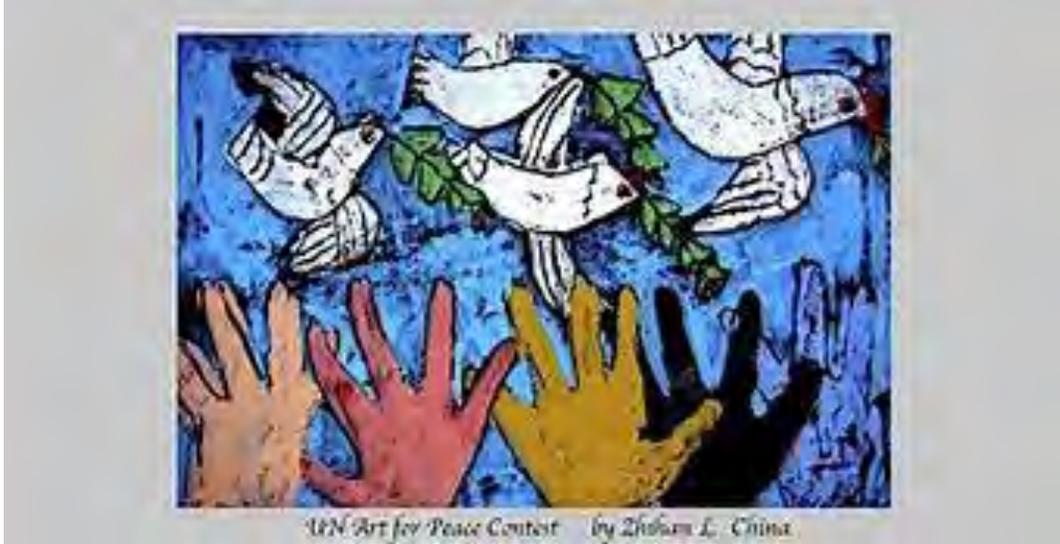
**TELL:** I call on all Episcopalians in Alaska to pray and reflect on their individual relationship with Jesus and to prepare a simple, from the heart, answer to the question: “Why is my hope/faith/love with Jesus Christ?” As you are comfortable, share your statement with someone else.



**TEACH/LEARN:** I call on all Episcopalians in Alaska to commit at least 15 minutes each day to reading and praying on the Gospel lesson assigned for Morning or Evening Prayer. How does the passage relate to your life, your situation? How is the Gospel part of your story? As you are comfortable, share your story with others.



**TEND:** I call on all Episcopalians in Alaska to engage in serving any one need in your community (neighborhood or deanery). Serving can be direct support or by contributing resources; however, service must include getting to know more about the need. Service can be a partnership with others: ecumenical partners, your deanery (funds to support that work). There are plenty of human needs in our communities. We don't have the energy or resources to tend to them all. Pick one that the Holy Spirit is calling you to do. You don't need to form a committee or establish an eternal ministry, just serve the need.



**TRANSFORM:** I call on all Episcopalians in Alaska to participate in the work of peace, justice, and reconciliation. Where do you see Jesus and his love being wounded? Where can you, working with others, be a bridge to reconciliation? Disciples make peace.

## **Caring for God's Creation**



**TREASURE:** I call on all Episcopalians in Alaska to commit to a discipline of stewardship and creation care, consciously reducing to some degree our energy consumption, and giving to support your local congregation and the common good of your community. How does your stewardship reflect what you treasure? How does it witness to what Jesus treasures?

Bishop Mark assures us, that this “Call” is not meant to be rigid, but to be an invitation to begin where we are. Start with just one mark of mission...and invite others to join and share with you.

Closing prayer: (BCP) 257

*16. For the Mission of the Church*

O God, you have made of one blood all the peoples of the earth, and sent your blessed Son to preach peace to those who are far off and to those who are near: Grant that people everywhere may seek after you and find you, bring the nations into your fold, pour out your Spirit upon all flesh, and hasten the coming of your kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

***The Bishop’s Address Committee***

Nell Gustafson (*TELL*)

Michele Bifelt (*TREASURE*)

The Rev David Terwilliger (*TEACH/LEARN*)

The Rev Carrie Oktolik (*TRANSFORM*)

The Rev Julie Platson (*TEND*)

*\*Many thanks to Michele Bifelt and Nell Gustafson for the beautiful design and artwork to capture the Five Marks of Mission as adapted for Bishop Mark's Call to the people of the Episcopal Diocese of Alaska to renewal and growth in discipleship, through the 5 Marks of Mission...*

