

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

The Rev. Canon Dr. Titus Presler

2023 Annual Meeting of the Global Episcopal Mission Network

In her report, GEMN President Ayda Patricia Martin has very ably covered the work of the network over the past year, so I focus my remarks on more general themes.

First, I comment on the very phenomenon of the themes of the Global Mission Conferences organized by GEMN. This year's theme is mission as Healing, a mysterious and transforming reality at the heart of the gospel. Last year we focused on Women in mission, a theme that highlighted Gender Justice. In 2021 Creation Care in mission was the focus. Evangelism in mission was the theme in 2019 when we met in the Dominican Republic. Mission as Connection was the 2018 theme at Virginia Seminary. Reconciliation as the ultimate aim of God's mission was our theme in 2017 in Alabama.

Through these themes we have been exploring different facets of the one yet complex mission of God in the world and in the human story. Since its founding in 1994 GEMN has highlighted the play on words of our acronym, which suggests a gemstone, a diamond in particular, with multiple facets. Each of these themes is a particular facet of God's mission, a particular avenue of understanding and engaging with God's mission in the cosmos. None of them explains everything about God's mission, but together they illuminate a complex reality. I encourage us to be revisiting these themes in thought and prayer, monitoring how our mission work participates in those themes. Amid all the particulars of our busy work, are we sharing the good news of Jesus? Are we catalyzing reconciliation? Are we connecting people with one another? Are we stewarding God's Planet Earth? Are we working toward gender justice? Are we participating in God's healing?

Second, I comment on GEMN's core values and purpose statement. In 2021 we for the first time identified core values for the network. Humility is first, meaning humility before God, humility before colleagues, humility before cultures, and humility before religions as we commit to listen and learn from others. Inclusion is second, by which we mean including all orders of ministry, all genders, all races, all ages and also all expressions of global mission. The Body of Christ has many members with diverse gifts, and we celebrate the marvelous diversity of global mission being carried out by GEMN members. Companionship is the third core value, meaning that authentic Christian mission is carried out through walking together, developing friendship and living in solidarity. We repudiate paternalistic, domineering and colonial approaches in mission.

So with those core values, what do we do? We gather, inspire and equip people to participate in God's mission. The Conferences, the Mission Formation Program, Mission Thursdays – in all these settings we seek to gather, inspire and equip. At Mission Thursdays we have gathered mission activists around particular topics over the past year: General Convention, the Lambeth Conference, Haiti, Sudan and the Middle East. The multiple resources GEMN has developed over the years, including the seven-week study series, *Questing: The Way of Love in Global*

Mission – all are geared toward inspiring and equipping. So the purpose statement provides us with a way to monitor and measure what we're doing.

Third, I comment on one discussion about our future. In conversations on Monday and Tuesday the GEMN Board was wrestling with the question of our outreach to the church. An important aspect of GEMN's work is providing settings in which people already involved in global mission can gather, as we're doing here in Tampa, to support one another, learn from one another and strengthen one another to engage God's mission more deeply.

A companion aim of GEMN from its beginning has been to catalyze global vision and engagement in all sectors of the Episcopal Church, especially in all dioceses. A number of dioceses are active in global mission, but there are also some with minimal or no engagement. So the Board is discussing how to reach out to help the unengaged to engage. Consulting with diocesan leaders will be key. Offering the Mission Formation Program in particular dioceses or provinces is a possibility. The new Global Mission Advocates Network in process of formation will be a help. In other words, we want to collaborate in spreading the word and sparking interest.

My final comment is simply to note that amid all the challenges and conflicts of the world in which we seek to be faithful, there is the continuing conflict within the Anglican Communion, running now for 25 years and more. Since the early years of this century, that conflict has affected and in some cases inhibited mission companionships. Just recently, for instance, the Global Anglican Futures Conference has challenged the very structure of the Anglican Communion. We pray that the alienations will not worsen, and sometimes it will require skill and nuance to sustain mission companionships amid the tensions. If amid the conflicts we continue to be on mission in humility, inclusion and companionship, we will, at least, have been faithful in our witness. And we pray incessantly for the healing of our precious communion.

Thank you all for being here and for your dedication to God's mission.