



Go Forth in the Way of Love

by Sarah Kye Price, Staff Writer

On my very first day at General Convention, I picked up a bright green wristband and my “Be Good News” t-shirt, hoping to live into my commitment to spread the Way of Love here at GC79. Each morning I have dutifully put on that wristband (whether or not it color coordinates with my outfit) along with the intention to live into that most elusive of concepts for us as Episcopalians: evangelism.

Over the past year, I’ve been rediscovering evangelism. As a grateful grantee of the Episcopal Evangelism Society, I’ve learned that sharing the good news transforms me, more than anyone else involved. Here at GC79, we have been repeatedly reminded that the Way of Love is the Good News into which we are living out our lives of faith. This doesn’t negate the fact that many of us carry around social baggage about “evangelism” based on the assumptions and past actions of others wielding that word. But, it doubles my resolve to change that narrative.

Each day, my bright green wristband has been an invitation to pay attention to my own actions, but also to allow myself to be revived by the evangelism of the angels of GC79, messengers of the Good News. So, as we prepare to go forth from this place, I am reflecting on the good news I have received here, and thinking about the ways to bring these evangelism lessons home.

Break and share bread together: Right before the opening Eucharist, a woman I didn’t know asked me if I would like to serve as a Eucharistic minister. Although I didn’t know what that would entail in a gathering this size, I said “yes” anyway. I felt myself inextricably connected to this larger Church: fed, nurtured and joined to the vast diversity of

people sharing this space. It reminded me how powerfully formative it is to serve the Body of Christ. On Wednesday, it was two beloved young children who offered me the bread of heaven. I have been challenged to think differently about pathways to service: not waiting (or requiring others to wait) until we know all the ropes, but being lovingly invited to serve exactly as we are, teaching and learning from one another as we break and share bread together.

When in doubt, choose love: Every day, there are people here at GC79 who walk the way of love. They pause to pray with friends and strangers for an end to gun violence; they offer kind comments; they hold out love to the women detained behind the cement walls at Hutto; they sit down beside someone living on the streets to talk and to pray instead of just walking by; they hand me tangible reminders of Christ’s love, like the daily “ministry of silly cards” my friend Faith Anthony in the Order of St. Helena has been distributing. It is a choice to be engaged in these acts of love. We could choose fear, or apathy, or selfishness. But God chose love, and so can we. Loving is a God-endorsed choice that we have experienced here, and that we can carry home with us for the purpose of its proliferation in the world. Become what you have experienced.

Trust the Body: What has impressed me the most here at GC79 is the reassurance that we do not have to think, speak or even believe exactly alike in order to be Church together, whether in our worship or in our polity. I have seen us develop common paths forward toward Prayer Book revision, and language that respects a great range of difference.

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Love Delayed is Love Denied

by Aisha Huertas, Director of Mission, Outreach & Diversity, Diocese of Virginia



As a Latina who interacts with many fellow Latinos and Latinas throughout the Episcopal Church, this 79th General Convention has felt like a beautifully choreographed dance. Every Latino and Latina present, as well as other people of color, has played a role in that dance, lifting up our plight before those who have the power to ensure that change happens and that people from every culture feel truly welcomed within the Church. We have worked in unity and strength at the request of no one, except our very own desire to be seen and heard.

Our legislative bodies have heard, considered and even passed several resolutions that affect people of color in our Church. There have been resolutions dealing with accurate translations of the Book of Common Prayer and other liturgies. There have been resolutions to add multicultural liturgies that include culturally appropriate observances. There has been language in resolutions that will help us to diversify Executive Council, planning committees and other groups. There have also been resolutions that take public stands on issues of immigration, sanctuary and other social-justice issues.

Yes, the tide is turning, especially with the readmission of the Church in Cuba to the Episcopal Church after more than 50 years of separation. These are great advances, but as a witness to the past two weeks, I find that I want the Church to do even more to combat the traditions of colonialism, white supremacy and institutional racism that are so

ingrained in many people inside and outside our Church – so ingrained that we are sometimes unaware when we act in ways that reflect those privileges.

If we are walking the way of love, then we must ensure that our neighbor feels accepted. We, the Episcopal Church and all of its dioceses, must continue ensuring that the very best translations and interpretations are provided anywhere they are needed and we must commit to improving the process every time. This can be costly, perhaps, but in my view the way of love supersedes cost challenges, discomfort, lack of time and all of those things that humans often see as obstacles.

We must come with open hearts to hearings, vestry meetings and other gatherings where debates often take place, and realize that some issues should involve little debate. Yes, the Book of Common Prayer may need revisions, but that does not change the fact that we need accurate translations of what we currently use. People are coming to our churches, now, to seek succor and support and to be welcomed. Justice delayed is justice denied; debating the right time for dynamic Prayer Book translation is the leisure of the privileged, well intentioned though the debates may be. The way of love seeks to meet the needs of others.

As I stood watching white supremacists take over the city of Charlottesville, Virginia, on August 12, 2017, I wondered, “How long will the Church go without acting? How long will we live in fear of upsetting those who disagree with us when the clear path, the way of Jesus, lies before

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We have listened while people spoke hard truths. This is counter-cultural in our ideologically polarized world. As we move into this triennium, we can bring this trust home. We can resist the urge to fight solely for our own individual perspective and consider first-and-foremost the Body of Christ. We can pray and patiently exercise deep listening across the divide. Try on what the Rev. Sam Candler referred to in a presentation to the House of Deputies as the *Via Comprehensiva*: the wider way where contraries do not always contradict. Let our first response be to trust the Body of Christ, so that we can hear our siblings, not just ourselves. Without that listening, we may miss our angels, the messengers of Good News in our midst who have much to teach us still.

Go forth, my friends, in the Way of Love!

Sarah is a professor of social work at Virginia Commonwealth University and a seminarian at Church Divinity School of the Pacific.

Love Delayed, continued

us?" I was grateful for all of the people of God who stood next to me, but they were a small group of courageous people compared to the largeness of the Church. The way of love takes only the side of justice and love.

My brothers and sisters, how long? Will you use the next three years to ensure that resolutions turn into actions both at the Church and local level? Will you begin planning, now, to ensure that your brothers and sisters of color, of diverse cultures, have a firsthand invitation to the table that doesn't feel like an afterthought? Will you live into your Baptismal Covenant in thought, word and deed?

Let us walk the way of love together in humility and openness, and with a true desire to get to know and love our neighbor and to meet them exactly where they are.

Those with Disabilities: Dispirited, then Motivated

by KC Robertson, Diocese of Los Angeles

Truth be told, the moment I will remember most vividly from GC79 will be when I went into the revival service as a beloved member of the Episcopal family, only to exit as a dispirited outcast.

I went with friends, snapping videos and craning my neck in every direction to take in the incredible site. It was euphoric. But that euphoria quickly turned into dispiritedness due to the lack of accessibility provided for my type of hearing loss. The leaflet was inadequate. The

short video had no closed captioning. Eventually, I had to move to the middle of an aisle, turn off my hearing aids and depend solely on reading the lips of our ASL interpreters in order to participate in the revival.

Somewhere in the midst of this, tears began to well up in my eyes. My joy started to dwindle. I was isolated.

I like to believe that those of us with disabilities are the original participants in the Jesus Movement. We help to make up the very tapestry Christ wove together with his message of what it means to be beloved and accepted, with no exceptions. We are the original recipients of Christ's radical welcome.

And yet, our time at General Convention has put salt into our wound. This is our reality: The Episcopal Church is still failing to provide a radical welcome for some, including those of us who are deaf and/or with disabilities, those of us with alternative capabilities. We "are not on the receiving end of that radical hospitality," as Karma Quick-Panwala, deputy of the Diocese of California, testified.

My time here has been marked by innumerable moments of joy in witnessing the Body of Christ coming together for adorations, discern-

ment and friendship. The abundant, tactile life of the Episcopal branch of the Jesus Movement is everywhere. And yet, isolation and inaccessibility have also marked my time here, and the time of many of my friends—an isolation that is very preventable.

Ironically, I give thanks for that isolation.

I give thanks for the frustrations and tears several of us have grappled with, because it has made us more motivated to address the "all" in "we welcome all people" -- more motivated to continue the slow and steady process of advocacy.

I give thanks for those tears of exclusion running down my cheeks at the revival, because that was the "aha moment" that spurred a dear friend of mine to introduce me to fellow advocates.

And I give thanks for being made a dispirited outcast, because I have witnessed the gathering of some remarkable people, both with disabilities and deaf, who have banded together to say we've had enough of feeling dispirited.

We are motivated to further the opportunities, information, resources and theological foundations needed to allow deaf people and/or those with disabilities to not just simply survive in the Church, but to thrive in forwarding the Jesus Movement. We are motivated to work to correct our Church's lack of radical welcome for those with disabilities or hearing loss, so that we might continue to be the very tapestry of the Jesus Movement. As such, we can convey the message of what it means to be beloved, accepted, active members of the beautiful Body of Christ.

KC Robertson has been the proud owner of hearing aids since she was a kiddo. She is a postulant of the Diocese of Los Angeles and a seminarian at Virginia Theological Seminary.

Overheard at GC79

Snippets of Testimony that Really Moved Us

Collected by Center Aisle's staff

"It's as if the Episcopal Church has been given a gift that we haven't unwrapped yet. We should celebrate the gift of same-gender partnerships the way we celebrate the partnerships of others."

—The Rt. Rev. Mary Glasspool

"You cannot have reconciliation without justice, and you cannot have justice without telling the truth."

—The Rev. Nancy Frausto

"Whenever privileged white people act unilaterally, it is the poor who take it in the neck."

—The Rt. Rev. Dorsey McConnell

"It's not what we have, but how well we do it, how incarnationally we do it. It's not so much [the Book of Common Prayer] but how we make it come alive. There are growing churches all over the place using Rite II, Prayer B with all ages."

—The Rt. Rev. Shannon S. Johnston

"Are we going to be chaplains of the empire or prophets of resistance?"

—A deputy quoting the Rev. Michael-Ray Matthews, American Baptist pastor

"The church is always reforming and our prayer is always reforming. We are excited to be a part of that reform."

—The Very Rev. Sam Candler, presenting to the House of Deputies the recommendation to concur with the House of Bishops' "Doyle amendment" on Prayer Book revision

"Bishop Griselda, please take your seat at Table 7."

—Presiding Bishop Michael Curry to Bishop Griselda Delgado del Carpio after the House of Bishops voted unanimously to readmit the Episcopal Church in Cuba as a diocese of the Episcopal Church

Thank you for reading Center Aisle. See you in Baltimore.

Almighty God, you sent your Son Jesus Christ to reconcile the world to yourself: We praise and bless you for those whom you have sent in the power of the Spirit to preach the Gospel to all nations. We thank you that in all parts of the earth a community of love has been gathered together by their prayers and labors, and that in every place your servants call upon your Name; for the kingdom and the power and the glory are yours forever. Amen. (For the Mission of the Church, BCP)