

# CONTOURS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE: EPISCOPAL IDENTITY

THE REV. CANON EMILY GRIFFIN

MARCH 18, 2026

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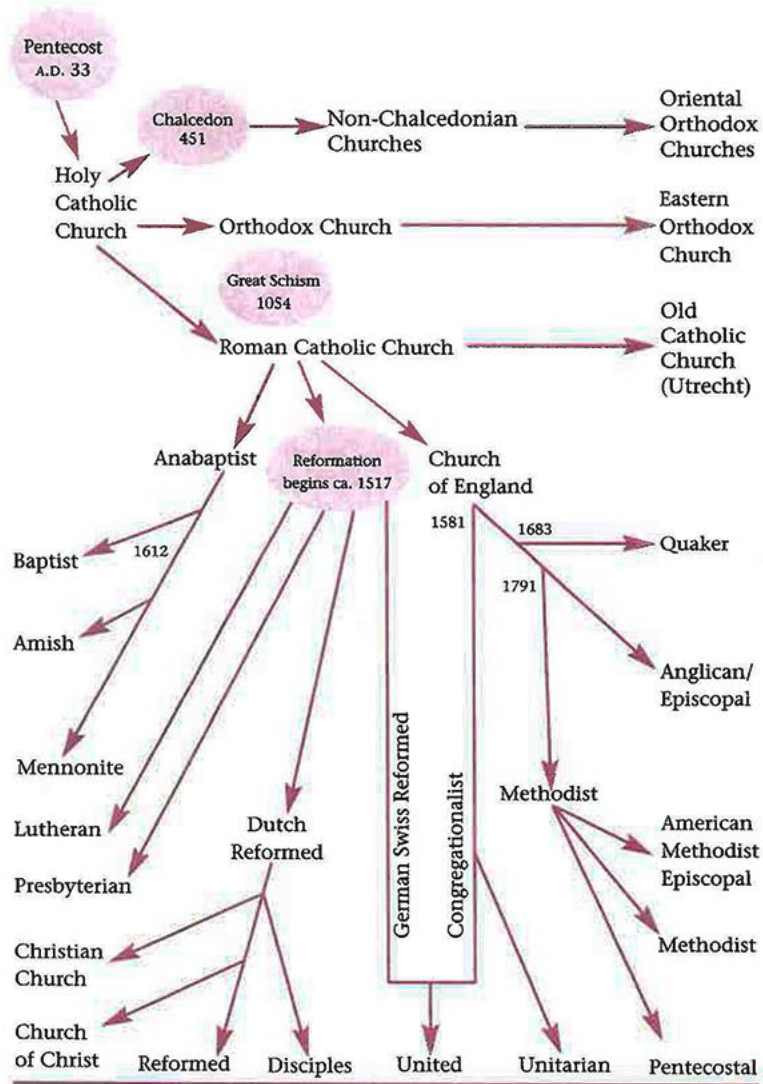
EPISCOPAL  
IDENTITY THUS  
FAR...

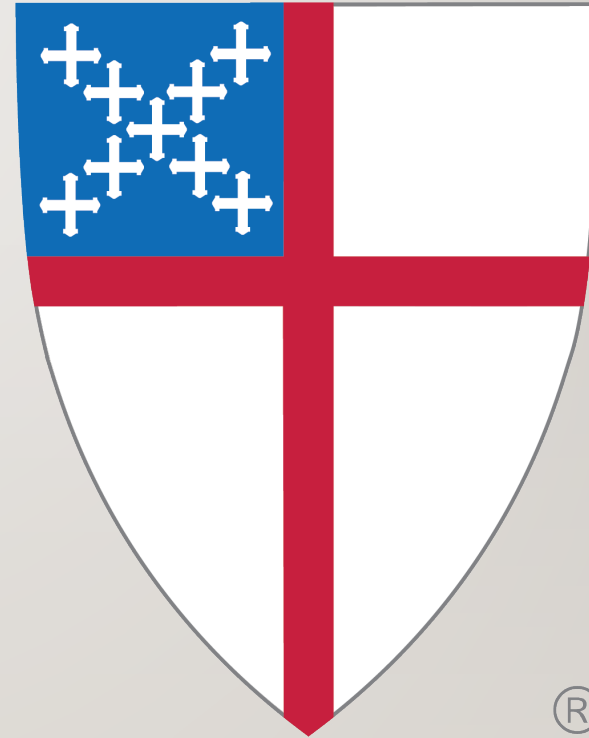
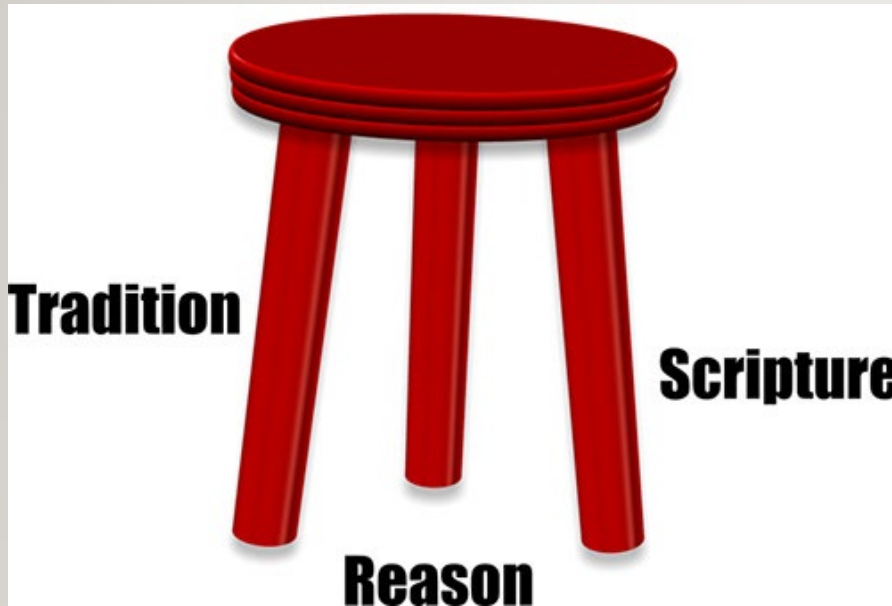
People of the Books: The  
Bible and the Book of  
Common Prayer

Full Members of the  
Body of Christ by Virtue  
of our Baptism

# FAMILY TREE OF CHRISTIANITY

WHERE  
WE  
COME  
FROM





# HOW OUR HISTORY SHAPES US

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# THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND CROSSES THE POND

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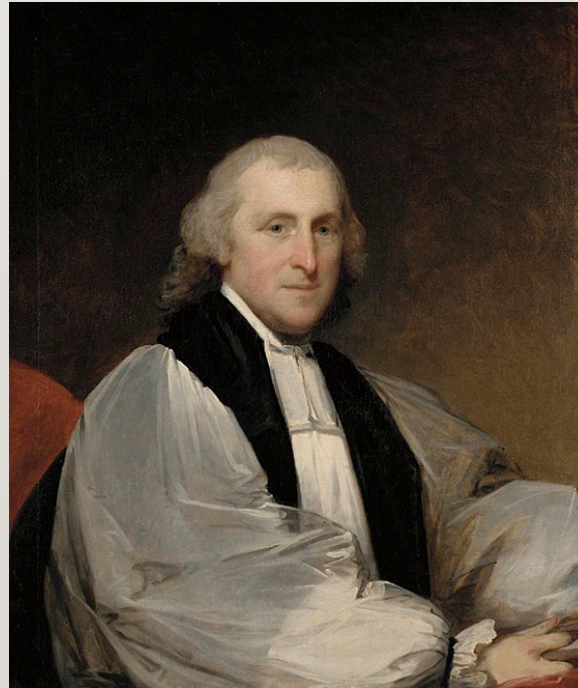


# THE PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA (1785)

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Samuel Seabury  
1<sup>st</sup> Bishop of CT (1784)



William White  
1<sup>st</sup> Bishop of PA (1787)



Absalom Jones  
1<sup>st</sup> Black Priest in TEC (1804)

# OTHER FIRSTS IN THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

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Enmegabowh  
1<sup>st</sup> Native American Priest (1867)



The Philadelphia Eleven  
The 1<sup>st</sup> Women Ordained as Priests in TEC (1974)

# MORE FIRSTS...

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- Barbara Harris
  - 1<sup>st</sup> Woman Bishop in Anglican Communion (1989)
- Katharine Jefferts Schori
  - 1<sup>st</sup> Woman Presiding Bishop/Primate in Anglican Communion (2006)
- Michael Curry
  - 1<sup>st</sup> Black Presiding Bishop in TEC (2015)

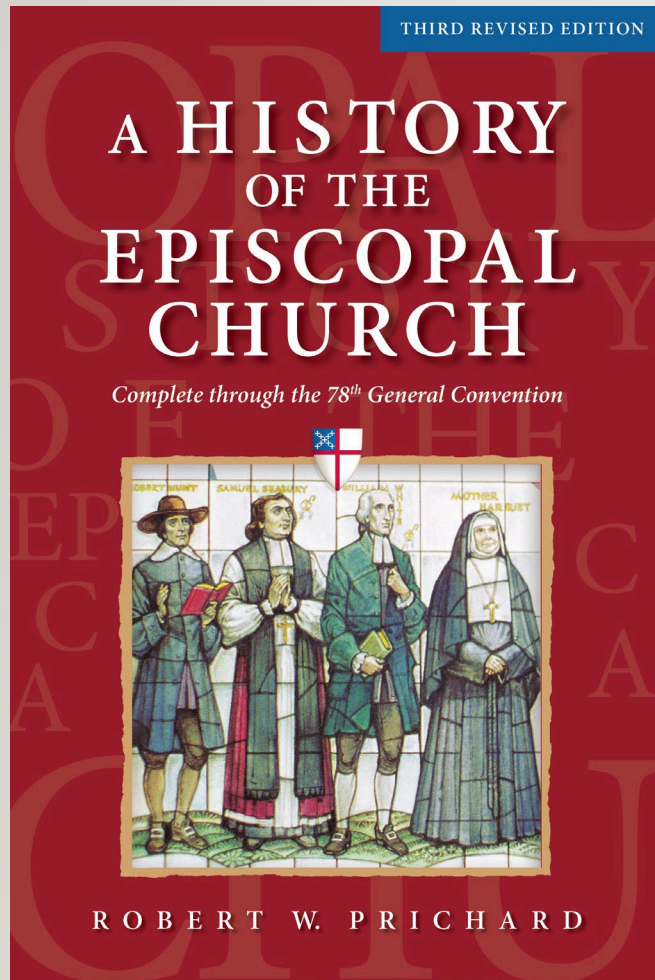


# MORE FIRSTS...

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- 1976: The Episcopal Church passes resolution that “homosexual persons have a full and equal claim upon the love, acceptance, and care of the Church”
- 1996: 1<sup>st</sup> same-sex couple has union blessed at Saint Mark’s Cathedral
- 2003: The Rt. Rev. Gene Robinson becomes first openly gay Bishop in Anglican Communion
- 2015: The Episcopal Church approves fully equal access to Holy Matrimony regardless of gender





## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

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HOW MIGHT KNOWING  
THIS HISTORY BE BOTH A  
BLESSING AND A  
CHALLENGE FOR YOU AS  
A PERSON OF FAITH?

HOW MIGHT THIS STORY  
BE PART OF YOUR STORY?

# HOW DECISIONS ARE MADE AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

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- VESTRY/WARDENS

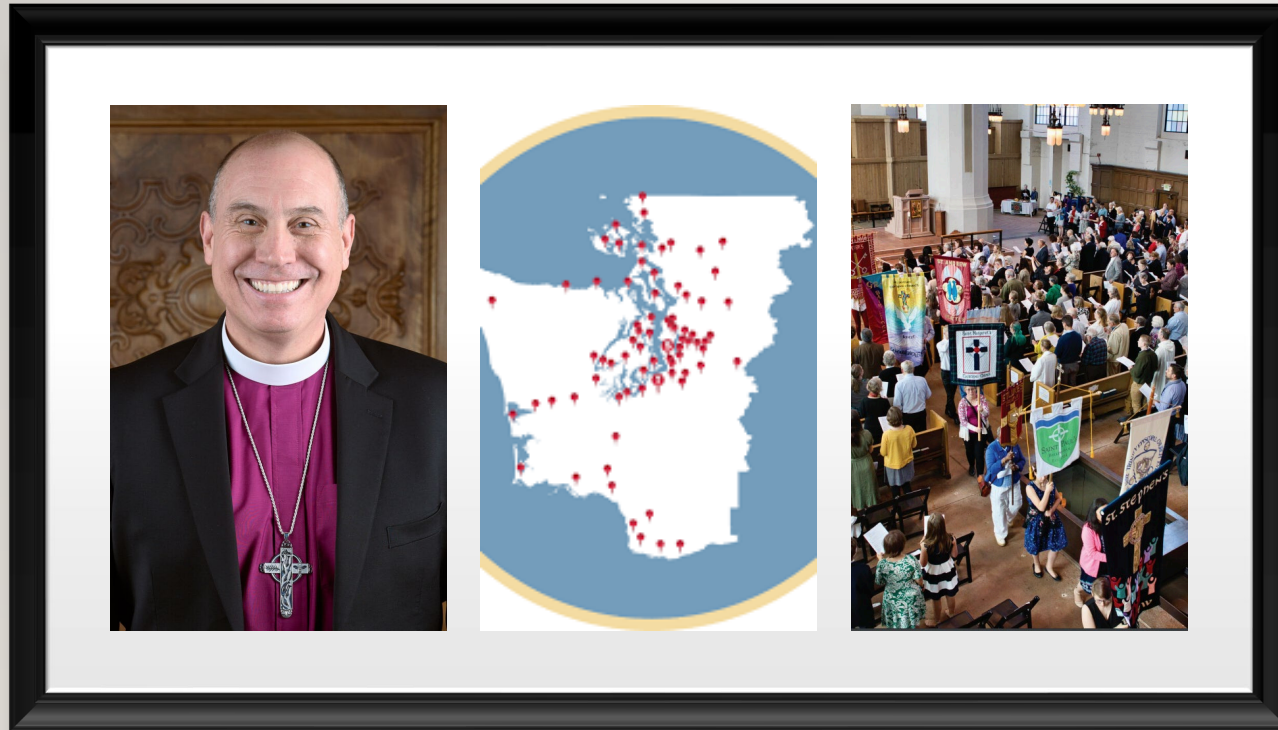
- Oversees Finances and Buildings & Grounds
- Calls the Rector/Dean
- Elected by “Parish Communicants in Good Standing”
- Must be Confirmed or Received

- RECTOR/DEAN

- Oversees the Spiritual Life of the Congregation
- Administers the Budget that the Vestry Approves
- Chairs the Vestry
- Calls the Staff

# THE DIOCESE OF OLYMPIA (1910 TO PRESENT)

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THE RT. REV PHILIP  
LABELLE, BISHOP  
(SINCE 2024)

90 PARISHES AND  
MISSIONS (2023)

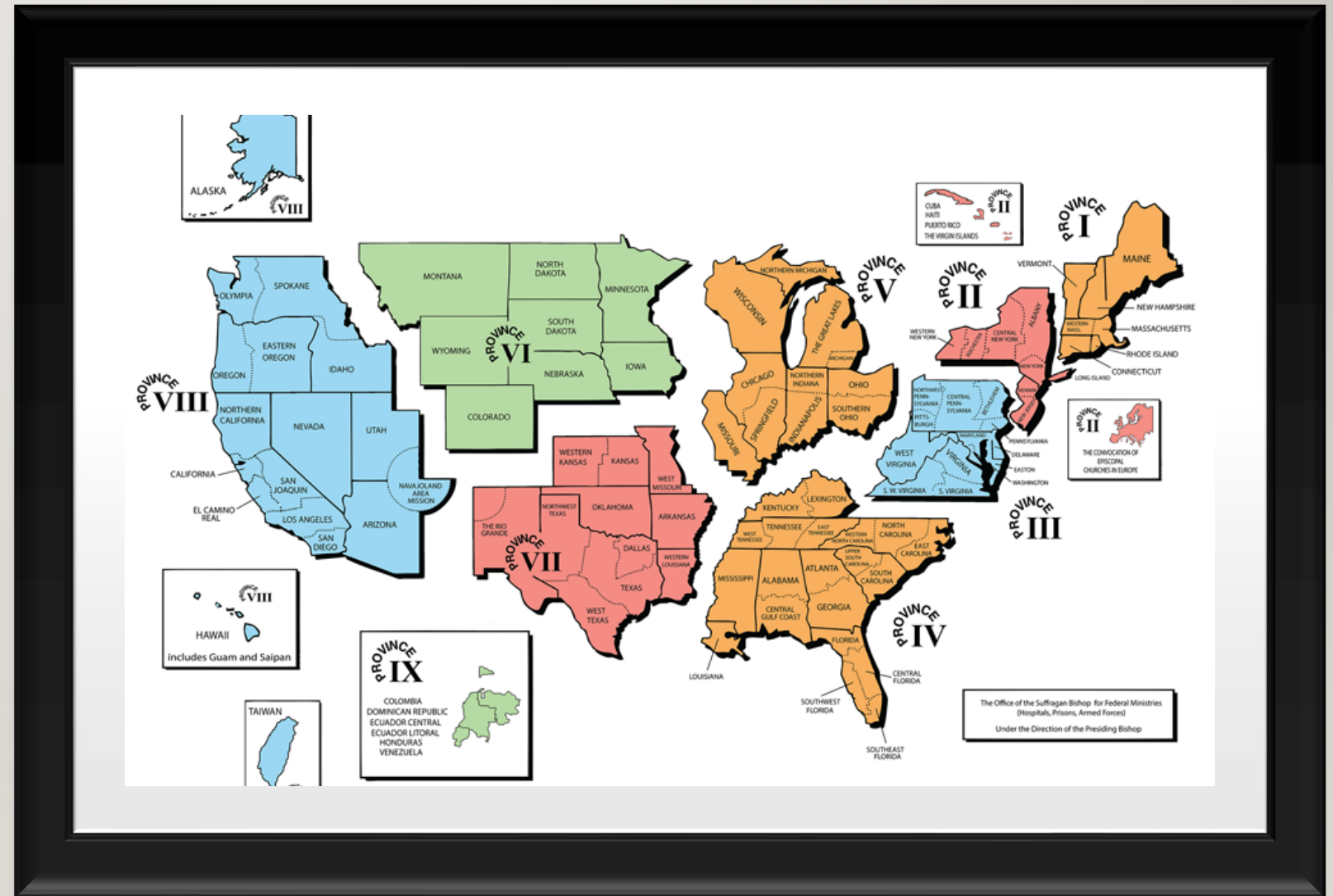
18,000 BAPTIZED  
MEMBERS (2023)

# THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH TODAY

1.5 million baptized members  
(2023)

6700 parishes and missions

106 dioceses  
in 22 countries/territories




# HOW DECISIONS ARE MADE AT NEXT LEVELS

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- DIOCESE

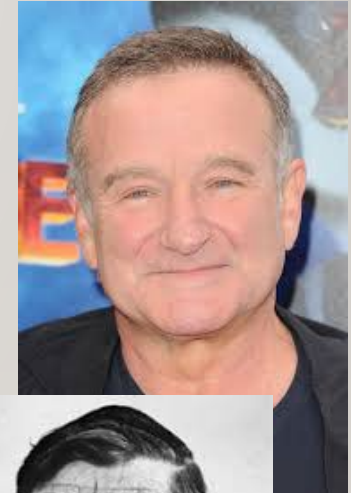
- Parishes elect Delegates to yearly Diocesan Convention
- Bishops represent the unity and universality of the church – they ordain priests and deacons, consecrate buildings, confirm and receive parishioners; pastoral and administrative roles
- Standing Committee, Diocesan Council, Board of Directors

- CHURCHWIDE

- Diocesan delegates elect Deputies to General Convention (every 3 years)
  - House of Bishops and House of Deputies (4 clergy, 4 lay from each Diocese)
  - Bishops elect Presiding Bishop every 9 years – heads strategy, spokesperson
  - 2024 – The Most Rev. Sean Rowe
  - It takes 2 consecutive Conventions to approve Prayer Book changes
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# FELLOW EPISCOPALIANS

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# WHY MIGHT EPISCOPAL IDENTITY MATTER?

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- Practice Being “A Community of Grace”
- A Guard Against Self-Absorption, Perspectives/Gifts of Multiple Generations
- It Gives Us Heroes and Role Models
- Stable Anchors for Wisdom and Meaning
- Freedom of Conscience
- Ordered, Embodied Prayer
- A Place to Discover and Share our Gifts
- It Extends Our Reach and Our Grasp