

A Pastoral Teaching on the Episcopate

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Preface.

Over the past three years in the Diocese of Tennessee there have been questions among our members about the responsibilities and role of the bishop. These questions were spurred in part by the Supreme Court decision in 2015 that made same-sex marriage possible in civil jurisdictions across the United States, including Tennessee. Changes in the Canons of the Episcopal Church, and the authorization for use of trial liturgies appropriate for same-sex marriage, took place in the same year. At the same time this authorization by resolution was coupled with the need for the clergy to seek the bishop's permission before their use, creating a new context and new questions.

Some parishioners were surprised to learn of the bishop's central role in the ministration of the sacraments and sacramental rites in the Churches of the diocese. "Why is the bishop an interested party in my marriage here at St. Blank's Church?" "Why does the bishop have a say in what liturgies we use?" Others were unaware of the nature of the relationship between the bishop and the clergy of the diocese and the lines of responsibility between them. "Why does the bishop get to establish policies in the diocese, about ordination or marriage or baptism or anything?" There were questions concerning the teaching role of the bishop. "I know the bishop is entitled to his opinion, but what does that have to do with what my rector is able to do?"

The passage of Resolution B102 by General Convention in 2018, creating new opportunities for the use of the Trial Rites, raises again the question of the responsibility and role of the bishop in the Church. Once again, there is a new context and new questions.

The answers to these questions pertain to the very nature of the ministry of the bishop. They also pertain to the very nature of what it means to be the Episcopal Church. There are other things that define us, but none of these definitions will be adequate in an "episcopal Church" without consideration of the ministry of the bishop.

The questions of the last few years reveal a need for us to think again in the Diocese of Tennessee about the role and responsibilities of bishops, and about the work of the chief pastor of a diocese. It will be the task of this pastoral teaching to communicate some sense of the ministry of the bishop in the Church.

First, consideration will be given to the origin of this ministry, as attested in the Holy Scriptures and in the early history of the Church. Second, the apostolic nature of episcopal ministry will be described, as illustrated in the Holy Scriptures and the Book of Common Prayer, under the three-fold aspects of proclaimer of the Gospel and teacher of the Faith; provider of the sacraments; and leader in the Church. Third, some consideration will be given to the way in which the bishop's

role as chief pastor is lived out in the day to day life of the Episcopal Church. Finally, attention will be paid to the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral, which sets episcopate within the teaching of the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion, as well as itself pointing toward the ecumenical vocation of the episcopate as a means to unity.

Origins

“The Holy Scriptures and ancient Christian writers make it clear that from the apostles’ time, there have been different ministries within the Church. In particular, since the time of the New Testament, three distinct orders of ordained ministers have been characteristic of Christ’s holy catholic Church” (BCP, 510).

The “Preface to the Ordination Rites” in the 1979 Prayer Book claims the ancient origin of the threefold order of bishops, priests, and deacons. This preface, in various forms, has been a feature of the Prayer Book tradition since 1550. Its relatively modest claims are well supported by the New Testament and the history of the Early Church.

Though the New Testament speaks of a variety of ministries (1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11), the role of oversight in the community of faith is well established. Bishop is of course a word coming from the Greek for “one having oversight.” In some places “elders” are identified as those serving as “overseers” or exercising “oversight” (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:1-2); in others the ministry of “oversight” or service as “overseer” or “bishop” is mentioned on its own (Tit. 1:7). In other places the work of the “overseers” or “overseer” is mentioned alongside the ministry of “deacons” or “servants” (Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:1-13) and of “widows” and “elders” (1 Tim. 5:1-22). A certain diversity of terms to describe those exercising oversight leads fairly quickly in early Christian history to the identification of “oversight” with the office of “overseer” or “bishop.”

St. Paul’s concern with the celebration of the Lord’s Supper in Corinth (1 Cor. 11), and the maintenance of unity, witness to his own understanding that apostolic oversight included the community’s gathering for worship. At the same time, the exhortations of the Pastoral Epistles also link oversight to “the pattern of teaching that you have heard from me” (2 Tim. 1:13), and “the words of the faith and of the sound teaching that you have followed” (1 Tim. 4:6), again for the sake of unity.

The letters of St. Ignatius (circ. 115), bishop and martyr of the Church in Antioch, provide evidence of the clear emergence of a threefold order of bishop, priests, and deacons in the Churches of Syria and Asia Minor, important early Christian centers, as well as the coalescence of oversight in the office of the bishop. They are an important witness to the connection between the office of oversight and the celebration of the liturgy and the proclamation and teaching of the Church.

“Flee from schism as the source of mischief. You should all follow the bishop as Jesus Christ did the Father. Follow, too, the presbytery as you would the apostles; and respect the deacons as you would God’s law. Nobody must do anything that has to do with the Church without the bishop’s approval. You should regard that Eucharist as valid which is celebrated either by the bishop or by someone he

authorizes. Where the bishop is present, there let the congregation gather, just as where Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church. Without the bishop's supervision, no baptisms or love feasts are permitted. On the other hand, whatever he approves pleases God as well... He who pays the bishop honor has been honored by God. But he who acts without the bishop's knowledge is in the devil's service" (*Letter to the Smyrnaeans* 8 in *Early Christian Fathers*, Cyril C. Richardson, trans. and ed. Macmillan: 1970).

Unity is expressed liturgically, according to Ignatius, but also in teaching.

"Some there may be who wanted in a human way to mislead me, but the Spirit is not misled, seeing it comes from God... When I was with you I cried out, raising my voice – it was God's voice – 'Pay heed to the bishop, the presbytery, and the deacons.' Some, it is true, suspected that I spoke thus because I had been told in advance that some of you were schismatics. But I swear by him for whose cause I was a prisoner, that from no human channels did I learn this. It was the Spirit that kept on preaching in these words: 'Do nothing apart from the bishop; keep your bodies as if they were God's temple; value unity; flee schism; imitate Jesus Christ as he imitated his Father'" (*Letter to the Philadelphians* 7 in *Early Christian Fathers*, Cyril C. Richardson, trans. and ed. Macmillan: 1970).

Good order within the Church demands the leadership of the bishop, not only at Baptism and the Eucharist but in teaching and throughout the life of the Church. Ignatius sees the bishop as a guarantor of unity within the Church. That unity is undercut by ministry that proceeds without reference to the bishop and the bishop's teaching. Church leaders from the next generation, particularly Irenaeus in France and Cyprian in North Africa, both formative of our theological tradition, continued these themes.

The picture drawn by the letters of Ignatius can be seen as an idealized picture of Church life, like the picture of the Jerusalem Church portrayed in Acts. "All who believed were together and had all things in common" (Acts 2:44). Yet these letters, like the picture in Acts, should not be seen as the product of idealizing tendencies but more as a robust essay on the need for unity within a Church actually challenged by heresy, schism, and persecution. It is precisely in times of confusion that episcopal ministry fulfills its mission as instrument of unity.

The Apostolic Ministry of the Bishop.

Episcopal ministry is often presented under three aspects: proclaimer of the Gospel and teacher of the Faith; provider of the sacraments; and leader in the Church.¹ The virtue of such a description is that it both pastoral and liturgical, organically rooted in the worshipping and serving community. The "Preface to the Ordination Rites" describes the order of bishops as those "who carry on the apostolic work of leading, supervising, and uniting the Church" (BCP, 510). This description brings

¹ See ["The Ministry of Bishops: A Study Document Authorized by the House of Bishops of the Episcopal Church" 1991](#). The Second Vatican Council document *Lumen Gentium* (1964) refers to bishops as "teachers of doctrine, priests of sacred worship, and officers of good order."

to the forefront the apostolic character of this ministry. In other words, the ministry of the bishop carries forward the work of the Twelve, called and sent by Jesus himself.

The Catechism describes the ministry of a bishop as representing Christ and his Church “particularly as apostle, chief priest, and pastor of a diocese,” (BCP, 855) again highlighting the apostolic character of the ministry. The bishop is the “apostle” of a diocese, exercising a ministry of oversight like that exercised by Peter and Paul in the Acts of the Apostles.

The Prayer of Consecration at the Ordination of a Bishop echoes the connection between the ministry of the apostles and episcopal ministry. This Prayer, drawn in part from the early document *The Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus, presents ancient themes. “Pour out upon *him* the power of your princely Spirit, whom you bestowed upon your beloved Son Jesus Christ, with whom he endowed the apostles, and by whom your Church is built up in every place, to the glory and unceasing praise of your Name” (BCP, 521). The prayer goes on to describe the bishop’s ministry as “wisely overseeing the life and work of the Church” (BCP, 521), again connecting the apostolic ministry of the bishop with the work of oversight.

The Catechism goes on to describe the bishop’s role as guardian of “the faith, unity, and discipline of the whole Church” (BCP, 855). This description is echoed in the Ordination rites themselves (BCP, 517). At Ordination, the bishop as “guardian of the Church’s faith” begins the corporate articulation of the Nicene Creed, leading the congregation gathered in the confession of the Church’s faith (BCP, 519).

These descriptions also remind us that the ministry of the bishop is not strictly local, within a diocese, but extends to sharing in leadership more widely. Again, the bishop is asked to “share with your fellow bishops in the government of the whole Church” (BCP, 518). This too is part of the apostolic character of episcopal ministry as seen in Acts. The apostles were not chiefly leaders of local Churches but above all overseers of the whole mission; certainly called to different roles (Gal. 2:7-10) but with a common care, like St. Paul, for “all the Churches” (2 Cor. 11:28).

The emphasis on the bishop’s role as guardian of the faith introduces the theme of proclamation and teaching that is central to apostolic ministry. The bishop is “called to be one with the apostles in proclaiming Christ’s resurrection and interpreting the Gospel” (BCP, 517). The bishop promises to “boldly proclaim and interpret the Gospel of Christ, enlightening the minds and stirring up the conscience of your people” (BCP, 518). The word “boldly” echoes the oft repeated emphasis on the bold speech attributed to the apostles in Acts (Acts 4:13, 4:31, 19:8).

Bold proclamation is informed by the teaching of the Holy Scriptures. The Consecration Prayer calls upon the bishop to “feed and tend the flock of Christ” (BCP, 521). Shortly afterward, the bishop is presented with a bible, given with these words: “Receive the Holy Scriptures. Feed the flock of Christ committed to your charge, guard and defend them in his truth, and be a faithful steward of his holy Word and Sacraments” (BCP, 517). The bishop promises to “be faithful in prayer, and in the study of Holy Scripture” in order to “have the mind of Christ” (BCP, 518).

The proclamation of the Good News of Jesus' death and resurrection, the interpretation of the Holy Scriptures, and the stewardship and exposition of the faith, are key roles that the bishop is called upon to play. The bishop is not alone in this: others are called upon to proclaim and teach as well. But the bishop is the sole person in the local, diocesan Church, who is charged with the guardianship and stewardship of the entire enterprise of formation, both in the local Church and in the larger Church.

The pastoral role of feeding and tending the flock leads to the second theme, provider of the sacraments. The charge delivered at Ordination calls the bishop "to celebrate and to provide for the administration of the sacraments of the New Covenant; to ordain priests and deacons and to join in ordaining bishops" (BCP, 517): responsibilities that are central to the bishop's role. The bishop is an "administrator" who provides for the sacraments by delegation, but is first and foremost present to the People of God as the celebrant of those sacraments. Sacramental ministry is of its nature incarnational, personally present, using persons and the material of creation to celebrate and convey grace.

The bishop promises at Ordination to "encourage and support all baptized people in their gifts and ministries, nourish them from the riches of God's grace, pray for them without ceasing, and celebrate with them the sacraments of our redemption" (BCP, 518). Episcopal ministry takes place within the context of the ministry of all the baptized, but the bishop is present alongside the People of God as the celebrant of the sacraments, and as intercessor for them. Again, the emphasis is pastoral and liturgical.

The Consecration Prayer includes "offering the holy gifts" (BCP, 521) as part of the bishop's role, a reference to the Eucharist that is picked up again in the Prayer Book's Eucharistic texts (BCP, 335, 338, 363, 364). In the Episcopal Church, the newly ordained bishop invariably serves as the chief celebrant at the ordination Eucharist, an ancient tradition recovered in modern liturgies that places the newly ordained bishop firmly within the Eucharistic assembly as the leader of the liturgy.

Liturgical leadership leads to a consideration of leadership itself. Leadership is by its nature collaborative; it is a gift that is shared. Leadership that does not work with others and does not cultivate new leaders is not leadership. Leadership, however, does require leading.

More will be said in the following section about the manifold leadership roles that a bishop is called to as chief pastor. Undergirding all of these roles is the necessary work of discernment that the bishop is called upon to perform in his or her order. The task of discernment is not unique to the bishop, but it is work that the bishop is charged with over and over again.

Discernment involves reflection upon what God is doing in the Church and in the world, and helping in the midst of this to chart a course for the community of faith. Leadership requires discernment, and discernment informs leadership. Bishops do the work of discernment every day, in regard to ordination, the call of clergy to parishes and missions, the licensing of clergy for service, the granting of licenses for lay ministries, the remarriage of divorced persons, matters of liturgy and

pastoral questions of all sorts bearing upon both clergy and laity. The bishop is called to specific works of leadership in all these areas. These are not acts of administration but acts of discernment.

At ordination, the bishop is asked, “Will you share with your fellow bishops in the government of the whole Church; will you sustain your fellow presbyters and take counsel with them; will you guide and strengthen the deacons and all others who minister in the Church?” (BCP, 518). The government of anything requires discernment; guidance and counsel are acts of leadership that demand discernment. Coupled with discernment is the due constitutional and canonical authority to act. Wise oversight, as the Prayer of Consecration puts it, is an act of leadership that is impossible without asking first what God is doing and what we are called to do in response. Discernment is impossible without the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. At all times what the bishop and the community of faith seek is to “have the mind of Christ” (BCP, 518), as St. Paul puts it (Phil. 2:5; 1 Cor. 2:16).

There is much more that could be said about the ministry of the bishop. The bishop’s role of hospitality, charity, and advocacy is a case in point: to be “merciful to all, show compassion to the poor and strangers, and defend those who have no helper” (BCP, 518). The “ministry of reconciliation” (BCP, 521), repeating St. Paul’s own words (2 Cor. 5:18) is another. The bishop’s call to be a “wholesome example for the entire flock of Christ” (BCP, 517) is yet a third. The roles of teaching and celebration of the sacraments, however, along with leadership, are those that are most in dispute at the present, and the focus has been here, at the point of controversy.

The liturgical texts of the Church, and its Catechism, articulate a theology of the episcopate, centered on teaching, liturgical celebration, and leadership. The emphasis is on unity. On the basis of this theological understanding, it is impossible to detach the office of the bishop from the ordinary life of the local Church, or from the leadership of the whole Church.

Chief Pastor.

The bishop is described at Ordination as “bishop and chief pastor” (BCP, 513) and as “chief priest and pastor” (BCP, 518). The bishop’s involvement in the celebration of confirmation or ordination (to choose obvious examples from the everyday life of the Episcopal Church) is part of a larger pattern in which the bishop acts as chief pastor of a diocese. This role of oversight is seen most clearly in the sacramental life of the Church. When the bishop is present he or she normally preaches and is the ordinary celebrant of the Eucharist, and presides as well over the celebration of Baptism (BCP, 298, 322, 354): a principle that in practice recalls that these ministries are the bishop’s, delegated only to others in the bishop’s absence.

The bishop says to the newly instituted minister at the Celebration of a New Ministry, “Let all these be signs of the ministry which is mine and yours in this place” (BCP, 562). The Letter of Institution provided in the Prayer Book for these occasions describes the presbyter as “authorized to exercise this ministry... in communion with your Bishop” (BCP, 557).

Ordination itself is a sign of the bishop's "taking order" to provide for suitable colleagues in pastoral ministry. Those being ordained, of course, promise to "be guided by the pastoral direction and leadership of your bishop" (BCP, 532, 543). Ordination is not a credentialing process that establishes "free agency" for those so ordained. Priests and deacons, delegated to carry out their pastoral ministry, are in communion with the bishop, becoming visible reminders themselves of the bishop's involvement in their work and the bishop's role as chief pastor. The central role of the bishop in the ordination process (along with the Standing Committee), as well as in extending canonical residence to diocesan clergy and the licensing of other clergy for ministry in the diocese, illustrates the same principle of delegation.

The bishop's role in licensing persons to certain specific ministries in parishes is another reminder of the work of oversight that the bishop exercises, both in teaching and in sacramental ministry, on the parish level. The Canons of the Episcopal Church, in requiring visitation of congregations every three years, gives this charge to the bishop: "The visiting Bishop shall preside at the Holy Eucharist and at the Initiatory Rites, as required, preach the Word, examine the records of the Congregation... and examine the life and ministry of the Clergy and Congregation..." (Canon III.12.3). These far reaching provisions, especially the final one, make clear the link between the bishop's ministry and the ordinary ministry of the congregation.

The occasionally exercised "disciplinary rubrics" (BCP, 409) by which a priest refuses communion to a person in certain pastoral situations, also recalls the bishop's role in the local congregation. The bishop is involved in the ministration of word and sacraments as well as the discipline of the Church on an ordinary basis, illustrated through the rubrical provision that the bishop must be notified by the priest of any such refusal. This provision in extraordinary circumstances is a reminder that the bishop is concerned in and has oversight of every ordinary ministration of the sacraments and sacramental rites of the Church.

The bishop's involvement in the process by which clergy in the Episcopal Church request permission from the bishop for the remarriage of divorced persons (Canon I.19.3), sometimes cited as an exceptional instance of the bishop's involvement in a pastoral office, is actually an example of the exact opposite: the bishop's ordinary role of oversight in every pastoral office of the Church. It is because the bishop is concerned with every marriage as chief pastor of the diocese that his or her explicit permission must be sought in the extraordinary instance of the remarriage of a person with a previous spouse still living. Additionally, the little noticed requirement (Canon I.18.2) that clergy who waive the thirty day notification period before officiating at any marriage must report this waiver to the bishop is a similar reminder of the bishop's role in the everyday pastoral ministries of clergy. Again, what is extraordinary reminds one of the ordinary jurisdiction of the bishop as chief pastor.

Canonical language also highlights the role of the bishop. The diocesan bishop is commonly referred to as "the Ecclesiastical Authority," a role played within the diocese by the bishop or, in the absence of a bishop, by the Standing Committee. The diocesan bishop is also referred to in the Constitution of the Church as "the Ordinary" (II.8) a traditional reference to the bishop's exercise of "ordinary jurisdiction" or oversight in the diocese.

Finally, bishops in the Episcopal Church are elected by their dioceses, with consent to election from the bishops and Standing Committees of the other dioceses. It is the only pastoral office in a diocese that requires election by the whole diocese. It is the only pastoral office in a diocese that requires consent from the other dioceses. The requirements of election and consent point toward the unique role of the bishop as chief pastor.

The bishop's role as chief pastor of a diocese is abundantly illustrated by the ordinary workings of the life of the Episcopal Church. There is no area of the life of a diocese for which the bishop need have no concern or pay no attention; no pastoral issue that does not fall under episcopal oversight either directly or by delegation. There is nothing self-aggrandizing about the claim: it simply comes with the notion of chief pastor.

Means of Unity.

The nature of episcopal ministry as a unifying force in healing the divisions of the Church has moved into increasing prominence in the last century or so. The Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral of 1886 and 1888 (BCP, 876-878) puts forth a vision of Christian unity in which four elements have prominence: 1) the Holy Scriptures, as “containing all things necessary to salvation” and “the rule and ultimate standard of faith”; 2) the Apostles’ and Nicene Creeds, as “the sufficient statement of the Christian faith”; 3) the two Sacraments “ordained by Christ himself – Baptism and the Supper of the Lord”; and 4) “The Historic Episcopate, locally adapted in the methods of its administration to the varying needs of the nations and peoples called of God into the unity of His Church.”

The Quadrilateral has guided the Episcopal Church's ecumenical engagements for over a century. The 1920 Lambeth Conference returned to the Quadrilateral, decades after it had first been embraced by an earlier Conference, as the basis for its “Appeal to all Christian People” concerning the unity of the Church. The Conference reiterated the role that the episcopate could have in unifying the Church.² The World Council of Churches document, “Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry” of 1982, also reflected increased ecumenical consensus about the role that bishops might play in the convergence of a divided Church.³

The Chicago statement in particular called for a restoration of unity among Christians on the basis of “the principles of unity exemplified by the undivided Catholic Church during the first ages of its existence.” These principles were “the substantial deposit of Christian Faith and Order committed by Christ and his Apostles to the Church.” Scriptures, Creeds, Sacraments, and Episcopate were “inherent parts of this sacred deposit... essential to the restoration of unity among the divided branches of Christendom.” The bishops of the Episcopal Church not only articulated a vision of Christian unity, but also set out markers concerning the nature of the Church.

² [Lambeth Conference 1920, Resolution 9, An Appeal to All Christian People](#)

³ [WCC, Faith and Order Paper 111, Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry, 1982](#)

These four “inherent parts” are not to be viewed as isolated elements, each standing on its own, but as related to each other. In other words, the episcopate is connected to the teaching of the faith and to the celebration of the Sacraments, and vice versa. The four together are something more than the sum of the parts. These elements are “essential” to the restoration of Christian unity because they connect us to “Christ and his Apostles” and to the mission that flows from the death and resurrection of the Savior (Matt. 28:16-20). Scriptures, creeds, sacraments, and episcopate are commended to all Christian people as providing a basis of unity for the divided Churches. They are also implicitly the basis of the unity that characterizes our own Churches in the Anglican Communion.

A brief consideration of the Quadrilateral indicates that something important attaches to the office of the episcopate; something important enough to consider in the same breath as scriptures, creeds, and sacraments. Appreciation of the role of the episcopal office in the church is growing, not diminishing. These four-fold elements of unity point toward the role of the bishop as an agent of unity, within the life of the whole Church and within each diocese. In ecumenical affairs, the episcopate is no longer seen chiefly as an obstacle to unity, but as a means to that end.

Conclusion.

All ministry is a gift, and episcopal ministry is no exception. It is not a personal possession of anyone but a gift that is held in trust. As St. Paul wrote to Timothy, “Guard the good treasure entrusted to you, with the help of the Holy Spirit living in us” (2 Tim. 1:14). All ministry is shared, and no bishop, priest, or deacon holds a ministry in isolation from the ministry of the whole Body. Ministry is the calling of the whole Church, in which particular ministries find their place. Ministry is communally discerned and held, and authenticated by the Church and not by individuals. None of us are called to ministry on our own nor do we hold our ministries as our own.

Having said this, it is also true that particular ministries have a necessary place, including the ministry of the bishop. This ministry consists of oversight of the life of the local diocesan Church, and a share in the leadership of the larger Church. As members of the Episcopal Diocese of Tennessee, we are not part of the branch office of some administrative entity or distributors of a religious “brand” by franchise from elsewhere. These self-definitions are inherently reductionist and unfaithful to the rich heritage we have received.

We are instead part of something far more profound and organic: a Eucharistic fellowship or communion, gathered in unity at the baptismal font, where new Christians are initiated into the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ; and gathered as well around Christ’s table, the altar where we continue to commemorate his sacrificial death and glorious, life-giving resurrection. The celebration of the sacraments is itself rooted in the proclamation by the Church of Jesus’ death and resurrection, which is both the source of the Church’s life and the mystery that the sacraments celebrate.

The bishop has a necessary role to play in the diocese as the proclaimer of the Word and the leader of our Eucharistic fellowship, in communion with the priests and assisted by the deacons, surrounded and supported by the prayers of the People of God. The bishop at the altar represents

the apostolic ministry of the world-wide Church, which carries forward Jesus' own ministry of love and service. The ministry of the bishop has two poles: the local Eucharistic community of the diocese, where he or she is the chief pastor, helping to lead the ministry of a diocese, and the world-wide Church, where leadership of the whole is shared with others. The bishop is a "bridge builder" in the old meaning of the word "pontiff", and acts as a point of connection bringing together the local Church, the world-wide Church, and the ministry of Jesus himself. The regular presence of the bishop at the altar at parish visitations is a reminder of the greater fellowship of which we as Christians are a part.

The ministry of bishops in the Episcopal Church is constitutionally ordered and canonically accountable, yet its origins and importance predate any constitutional order. Episcopal ministry is organic to the Body of Christ, at the same time that we acknowledge that it does not stand on its own. The logic of the Scriptural and sacramental order of the Church makes discovery of places in the life of the Church where a bishop "has no jurisdiction" anomalous and against the grain of Church order. Oversight is at the heart of the apostolic ministry of the bishop.

The Holy Scriptures and the Book of Common Prayer guide our self-understanding as Christians, as members of the Church. They also guide our understanding of the ministry of the bishop. These sources provide ample evidence that episcopal ministry is necessarily involved in the sacraments and other sacramental rites of the Church in the diocese, in the ministries of clergy in places where the bishop has oversight, and in the articulation of Church teaching within the diocese. This view is supported not only by the Scriptures and the Prayer Book, but also in the governing documents of the Episcopal Church and the regular experience of clergy and other members of the Church.