

## Bishop Lee's presentation June 17, 2019

*Canoeing the Mountains* brings together threads from various themes. The book is less about tools than about the stance needed to come up with the necessary tools.

A megachurch can be seen as spinning in space by itself. In contrast, the Episcopal Church (TEC) is structured around a central diocese that provides help to individual parishes.

The Chicago Diocese encompasses 122 parishes (126 including campus ministries). Its mission is to  
Grow the Church (spiritually as well as numerically)  
Form the faithful  
Change the world (ie, set people free).

Originally there were three Illinois dioceses--Chicago, Springfield, and Quincy. Quincy, based in Peoria, was very conservative in outlook and never took off. Fourteen of its 22 congregations left the diocese 6 years ago; the remaining 8 stayed and subsequently joined the Chicago Diocese. We are part of Province 5 (the Midwest).

Diana Butler Bass has said that the most deadly of the seven deadly sins is nostalgia.

Episcopalassetmap.org(?) provides statistical information for all ministries. In the Chicago Diocese, 74% of clergy are compensated; in the entire TEC, the figure is 58%. Many clergy are volunteers or are paid on a part-time basis. Fifty-four percent of parishes in the diocese are running an operating deficit. We are blowing through our endowments!

A sociological study found that 80% pew occupancy is ideal for the primary Sunday service. The actual figures are as follows:

	Average Sunday attendance	Average seating capacity
Diocese	98	231
Province	71	210
TEC	87	216

The official TEC membership is 2.1 million, but 1.7 million is more realistic. Episcopal churches are small by design, along the model of an English parish (think Grantchester).

"The Episcopal/Christian Church is not dying but molting" (ie, dropping indifferent casual members). All mainline Christian churches are declining in numbers; the Southern Baptist Convention is hemorrhaging members.

*Canoeing the Mountains* states that the church is facing an "adaptive challenge," as opposed a technical challenge. Similarly, Lyndon Johnson faced an adaptive challenge rather than a technical fix in securing passage of civil rights legislation. There is no quick fix. Canoes are irrelevant in today's society.

What is the mission of the church? There is nothing that can separate us from the love of God; every human is loved infinitely.

We need a different set of tools, envisioned as an overlapping triad:

- Adaptive capacity, with a heavy dose of experimentation

- See systemic issues
- Calmly confront the unknown
- Lead a learning process
- Express process by asking questions.
- Technical competence
- Relational congruence/emotional intelligence. Communication is an emotional enterprise, per Paul's writings

God does not need TEC. There is no success or failure pattern.

It's important to let go of what's not working--quickly.

Be curious about what's really happening. Seek new perspectives. Folks on the margins have already learned some stuff.

Stay calm, collected, and clear.

Learn and change without sacrificing personal and organizational fidelity. There will be no cupholders in the pews!

What is our deepest identity? The former Quincy Diocese parishes are doing better without their buildings. We must let go of many trappings, including buildings.

At 65 E Huron, the staff has gone from occupying three floors to one floor. The New York TEC building is two-thirds renter occupied.

"Leadership is disappointing your own people at a rate they can absorb."

The only essential question: What leads people to greater spiritual vitality?

The Willow Creek formula for growth consists of knocking on doors, asking what needs are not being met, and meeting them. People will then come to the church.

What can St Matthew's offer that meets needs? Do many fewer things better. Change 30% of everything, because change injects vitality.

We want to help the community--why? Bishop Lee thinks there's a passion for this at St. Matthew's.

Bob Teska's comment: Change/work process beginning from within, as at Rotary.

Our *why* is the baptismal covenant. We trust that Jesus is behind our response. We can let go of everything else.

Many people in the "Nones" category look for spiritual nurture in place such as Soul Cycle, CrossFit, yoga classes. They are being brought into dialogue with the church by spiritual entrepreneurs. They want traditional religious authorities to bless them. Bring church to them!

Read Paul in Athens: I see you are religious; tell me about that. People are innately spiritual.

Notes by Deborah Williams