

The Rev. Susan B. Haynes

- Questions posed by the Diocese of Southern Virginia to Bishop Candidates -

- 1. Jeremiah 9:24 says “But let those who boast boast in this, that they understand and know me, that I am the Lord.” Tell us about who you understand and know God to be, and tell us how as Bishop you would call us to boast in him.**

This prophecy of Jeremiah is against a people who have ceased to follow the LORD and who no longer know the God who created them. Jeremiah is calling them to lament the fact that they have put their trust in wisdom, might and wealth – false gods, who are unworthy of Israelite trust. He calls them to boast only of their trust in the LORD. Who is that LORD? I understand God to be that all-encompassing Creative Being who created everything that exists, who called into existence even things that do not exist [Romans 4:17]. AND SO, GOD IS THE GOD WHO MAKES POSSIBLE THE IMPOSSIBLE. God is also the one from whom we can never be separated [Romans 8:39]. AND SO, GOD IS THE ONE WHO NEVER LEAVES US. And God is the one who knows us intimately and loves us beyond our ability to imagine [Psalm 139 and Luke 12:7]. AND SO GOD IS THE ONE WHOSE LOVE LIGHTS AND EMPOWERS THE WAY.

We are not called to boast in wisdom, might or wealth, as tempting as those things are, but we are called to boast in the LORD. As Bishop of the Diocese of Southern Virginia, before calling anyone to boast in the LORD, I would want to know and understand who is the LORD in whom YOU are called to boast. You have asked me, and I would spend some time asking you. I would encourage members of our Diocese to engage in spiritual disciplines and practices that would move them closer to God, and then I would encourage us to share our experiences so that the boasting could begin.

From this kind of boasting, our vision would emerge. I would exhort all of us to reach for that dream and vision of a healthy, vibrant Diocese working collaboratively to include all parishes, both large and small. In places where that vision does not seem clear or does not shine so brightly, I would remind us all that we follow a God who calls into existence the things that do not exist and who makes possible the impossible. I would call us to strike out confidently and powerfully on the trail of evangelism since we move with a God who never separates God's self from us. Since nothing separates us from God, then we are empowered to unite around a mission to spread that holy connection to the world around us. God knows and loves completely the people of the Diocese of Southern Virginia! His love for us shines brightly enough that we are empowered to walk with confidence into a place of hope and joy.

- 2. It could be said that each order of ministry has been given gifts for the exercise of that ministry. Looking at your current priestly ministry, do you believe there are gifts you have been given that would continue to be useful to the diocese and do you see yourself as possessing a few episcopal gifts that have not yet been manifested?**

By virtue of their baptisms, all Christians are given gifts for ministry which are exercised in the various orders of ministry (laity, deacons, priests, bishops). Through their baptismal identities, all are given authority to exercise these gifts, and all are on equal footing as they work together to represent Christ to the world. In my priestly ministry, I have exercised the gifts of pastoral care, preaching, teaching and oversight. Each of these gifts, of course, would be required and beneficially used in an episcopate. I have used these gifts both in my parish and beyond my parish in the diocese through consultation with other clergy and lay leaders in vestries and in churches that are seeking to develop. Anyone elected to the office of Bishop would find her/himself on a steep learning curve and in the position of reaching for gifts that have not yet been manifested. I sense within myself stronger gifts of oversight, guardianship of the faith and reconciliation that would be called upon and enabled by the

Holy Spirit in the event that I am elected Bishop. I have been given a glimpse of these gifts through my work on the wider Episcopal church level and in ecumenical efforts at General Convention and in participation on national church committees.

3. How have you experienced the creative influence of the Holy Spirit in your ministry?

My church and I have learned that during periods of crisis or confusion, if we will pause, enter into silence and pray for the intervention of the Holy Spirit, then amazing things happen! This presence of the Holy Spirit has enabled us to come to consensus where conflict has been present. We have become united in action to respond to wrong. For example, when a young single mother experienced the loss of her only two children through a tragic accident, we stepped in. She was unchurched and had no funds for a funeral. We provided the money to bury her daughters and conducted the funerals. When the Tree of Life Synagogue shootings happened in Pittsburgh, we stepped forward and lobbied our Bishop to contact the Jewish synagogues and temples in our city to offer our solidarity as an entire Diocese.

In our worship, we have increased the voice of our Laity through the establishment of an Order of Lay Preachers – lay persons with gifts for preaching, who are licensed by the Diocese and mentored by the Rector. We have organized a group of lay persons who regularly administer pastoral care in addition to the care offered by the Rector. Through the development of these lay ministries, we have seen the work of the Holy Spirit energize our congregation.

The most amazing influence of the Holy Spirit has manifested itself in the life of our children. Our parents have expressed a desire that their children experience the liturgy from birth to adulthood, so they choose to have the children remain in church with them rather than go to the nursery. The Holy Spirit has shown us that the best way to keep children in church is to involve them in the service. We offer an interactive Children’s Homily. The children frequently take part in the procession. During the final hymn they gather in the back to play percussion instruments and to offer “liturgical” dance. They assist the celebrant with the dismissal. One of the fruits of this influence is that as early as ages 6-8, our children are asking to be trained as acolytes and lay readers. They want to be in church! We have several families who have joined our church who say that it was their children who, after visiting, insisted that they return...that this is the church where they belong!

4. Many are describing our world as post-Christian. How have you responded to this new context creatively in your ministry?

Although people are not attracted so much to the Christian faith today as perhaps in the past, they still have a longing for connection to the Divine and for the use of ancient practices. Every year on the Sunday afternoon closest to St. Francis Day we advertise and offer a Pet Blessing service in our parking lot. People in the neighborhood bring their animals to us, offer them for a blessing by the priest and then remain for cookies, hot chocolate and lemonade while their pets also enjoy treats. It is the only time, for some of these people, that they have ever been on church property. For some of them, it is the only time I see them all year. Often, they bring their beloved pets forward with tears in their eyes. Once a week, I hold “Open Office Hours” in a local sports cafe. Members of the parish come and have lunch with me and sit with me as we talk to some of the “regulars” who are in for lunch. These regulars know us, and they always seem happy to see us. Once, we buried one of them, and they came to the church where, for the first time ever, some heard the Gospel preached. My church has an annual fund-raiser that involves cooking Peanut Brittle on Monday nights from October to Christmas. The smell attracts people walking by the church (we are on a bus transit line). Often people follow their noses and come in and end up helping us with the endeavor. Every Wednesday evening, we offer a Contemplative Evensong, basically the Order for Evening Worship interspersed

with periods of silence, meditation and reflection. The neighborhood has found out about this and has come to explore. Their response has been to come back because they like how restful the experience is. The world may be post-Christian, but it is not post-God. I would say that we are “post-being-able-to-take-our-membership-for-granted” and need to meet people where they are and establish church in their midst.

- 5. What does social justice mean to you? In the Examination of the bishop-elect the last question asked is this, “Will you be merciful to all, show compassion to the poor and strangers, and defend those who have no helper?” How might you demonstrate in your episcopate your willingness to fulfill this promise “for the sake of Jesus Christ?”**

Social justice means reaching out with the arm and voice of advocacy to assist those who, by virtue of their circumstances, are not in a position to help themselves. We are charged to do this in our Baptismal Covenant. Throughout Scripture, we are exhorted to help the alien, the poor, the widow, the orphan – those whose social standing has been destroyed by circumstance or in some cases, the ill will and greed of others. This is counter-cultural work and we must be prepared sometimes even to abide loneliness as we engage in this work. In the past few years, I have experienced transformation when I have been able to stand for those who have no helper. I have attended rallies and meetings for the sake of the immigrant, the racially oppressed, those marginalized by virtue of their sexual identity and orientation. I have worked with groups who have worked with our legislators to enact laws that level the playing fields between races and marginalized groups of people. These acts of standing and working put me in touch with the grace of God which longs to be communicated to our world.

When I last attended General Convention, I was aware of my obligation to sit on the floor of the House of Deputies and attend to the sometimes tedious work of legislation; but the events of General Convention which truly energized me were attending the liturgies and rallies aimed at healing and change. When prayer is combined with action, energy of cosmic proportions is unleashed! The position of the office of Bishop enables the person who holds it to make a public witness on the side of the poor and marginalized. This kind of witness should always be grounded in a vital relationship with Jesus Christ so that it does not evolve into political ranting. Sometimes taking a political stand might be necessary, but this must never be done in a way that divides and polarizes the Christian community. Instead it should be done in a way that dignifies all of humanity as beloved children of God.

- 6. What do you see to be the greatest needs of today’s youth? How do you think the church must adapt in order to better meet these needs?**

People in our world today are lonely...including young people. One of the greatest needs of today’s youth is connection – with themselves, with each other, with older, mentoring adults and with the Church. I see the youth today as being rightly concerned with growing into the people that God intends them to be and with mending social ills that seek to destroy God’s beloved world. The Church must find healthy ways to model for youth how to be in relationship. This is counter-cultural work because it requires the church to step back and take time. Youth need adults who are willing to be in relationship with them and take time with them as they discern their own vocations and make their way forward. Our culture today puts too much pressure on youth to succeed in the areas of education and career, at the expense of their spiritual health. Churches must be less focused on these cultural idols and more focused on the preciousness of those whom God has created in these young people. Making ourselves available to pray and be in relationship with the youth is the biggest adaptation the Church must make. The voice and presence of the youth deserves equal footing in our

midst. And while we are at it, we might consider what kind of support we as a Christian community can offer to those who parent these youth.

7. Likewise, what do you see to be the greatest needs of an aging population. For example, dementia, depression, failing health, Alzheimer's and the needs of the caregivers?

As I mentioned in the question with respect to youth, people in our world today are lonely...including the aging population. As people enter the last part of their lives, they want to remain connected and to continue to have worth and value. Diagnoses of dementia, Alzheimers and mental health issues are increasing as Baby Boomers age. Unfortunately, because a certain amount of stigma is associated with these diagnoses, we shy away from conversation about them and force those who are dealing with them into social isolation. Consider the person, for example, whose spouse is diagnosed with Alzheimer's. He wishes to keep her diagnosis a secret for as long as possible, so that others will continue to treat her and interact with her normally. This becomes more and more difficult as the disease progresses. Consequently, even getting her to church Sunday after Sunday becomes increasingly impossible. The response of this caregiver is not to ask for help, but to quit coming to church. And so, the isolation increases. And the church's body is diminished on many levels. The Church is called, as people age, to continue to treat them as people, because that is what they still are. Perhaps through offering workshops, the Church can erase the stigma of these diseases and teach people how to respond. Then when the caregiver brings his ailing wife to church, the community can surround and care for her, giving the caregiver a much-needed break. The church can also be a resource for education and support regarding medical advocacy, end-of-life issues, funeral planning, estate planning. To be able to deal with these issues within the context of a caring, supportive spiritual community would be such a gift. Again, this is counter-cultural work and requires us to acknowledge the ongoing humanity of those who approach the end of their lives, and to be vitally present to them even when they are no longer able to be so vitally present to us.

8. Have you seen successful efforts in any diocese which promote a common vision for the work of that diocese as a whole entity? Have these efforts been effective in coordinating the ministries of the laity, the deacons, and the priests?

In my own Diocese, from 2008 to 2016 we engaged in a Diocesan-wide congregational development program. I was privileged to be a trainer and leader in this endeavor. During these eight years, we gathered four times a year for weekend retreats during which representatives of various congregations engaged in learning about how to develop vital, healthy congregations. These representatives learned together, brainstormed together and supported each other. They developed projects which they took back to their parish and worked on together. A camaraderie developed among these parishes and spread throughout the Diocese as we began to see each other's projects succeed. As these 8 years drew to a close, one of the things we realized was that, while there were many phenomenal results in congregational development, the best result of the entire program was the frequent fellowship and contact we had with one another. We truly wanted every parish in our Diocese to succeed and there was no unhealthy competition. Parishes began to trade resources and to interact with one another. Laity, Priests and Deacons valued the roles that each played in their work. This kind of success did not happen in a vacuum. Our Bishop laid some groundwork in the years leading up to this project by envisioning for us some core values around which we could center our efforts. These core values were as follows:

- A passion for the Gospel of Jesus Christ,
- A heart for the lost,
- A willingness to do whatever it takes,
- A commitment to one another.

These core values served as guideposts for us as we did our work. They affirmed us as children of God trying to live out our Baptismal promises. When a new Bishop assumed command of our Diocese, he articulated a vision based on the Five Marks of Mission. We were able to embrace that eagerly and move forward because of our success with this previous vision. This kind of process can surely be duplicated in any Diocese as all Dioceses have core values – they simply must be discerned and articulated. This is the beginning of developing vision.

9. Tell us how you think meaningful change occurs. How have you helped facilitate changes in the church? What principles helped guide your leadership?

Meaningful change occurs in communities where deep trust is nurtured and careful development of processes for planned change occurs. In order for trust to develop in a healthy manner, four things must be done. First, we should carefully listen to all voices that are present and who have a vested interest in the change that is being planned. It should also be noted if certain voices are absent, then efforts should be made to obtain feedback from the absent voices. Then, once everyone has had a chance to articulate their interests, the next phase is to communicate carefully and thoroughly the process by which the group is going to move forward. If the first phase (listening) has been attended to carefully, then groups are going to be attentive to the clear, transparent communication that is offered. Once the process is effectively spelled out, then the group will enter the next phase, which is that of moving in a shared direction. During this movement, continued attention to clear, effective communication (both offered and received) should be diligently made. At this point, the group will begin to share the vision that has been developed and will move in the direction of that vision. In my own parish, within my diocese and at the wider church level, I have been privileged to be part of several different processes of change. Having the gift of excellent people skills enabled me to help facilitate listening and communication at those first phases of trust development. I have been impressed with how much effort must go into those first phases of listening and communication. This takes more time than people at first might think. If those phases are shorted, then there will never be “buy-in” and the proposed change will fail. As a leader trying to help bring about these changes, the principles that have guided my own leadership have been the importance of healthy Christian community, compassion, patience and authenticity. And of course, it is mandatory to “trust in the slow work of God!” (Teilhard de Chardin)

10. What are the most essential elements of the church’s evangelistic witness? How have you modeled this witness in your own life? How would you encourage the church to engage in evangelism in new ways?

The most essential elements of the church’s evangelistic witness include our relationship with Jesus Christ, the example of our relationship to one another, and our willingness to be in relationship with the neighborhood that surrounds us. The nourishment that we derive from our ongoing relationship with Jesus Christ feeds our passion for spreading the Good News. We attend to that relationship through prayer, the study of Scripture and frequent contact with Jesus through the receiving of Holy Communion. As we grow in that relationship, we radiate Jesus’s love to everyone we meet.

Frequent contact with each other is also essential. As we develop and nurture our community with one another, we become a counter-cultural beacon of light in a dark world. People begin to take note of how we treat one another and want to know more about what enables us to do so.

And finally, we more effectively evangelize someone with whom we are willing to be in relationship. In the Acts of the Apostles, when Paul is called to Macedonia, he proclaims the world of God and converts Lydia, a Gentile woman. His evangelism of her comes, however, after having stayed in this city for several days getting to know the people. Churches would do well to learn the neighborhoods

in which they are situated, to be in relationship with their neighbors so that they have a foundation on which to proclaim the Gospel. We can assume that in the community that surrounds our churches, people live who are desperate to hear the Good News. Who are they? How can we reach them? For example, if the one population in our community which is growing the fastest is that of single-parent families, then we need to be about the business of asking how we can support these families. Would they benefit from counseling about how to manage finances? Would they profit from a loving gathering once a week or so where they could converse with each other over a meal while their children enjoy Christ-centered activities and fun? If we are in a community where a growing population is those who are aging and retiring, how can we effectively reach out and minister to them? Can we remind them that they are beloved children of God as they and their caregivers struggle with the aging process, and the health concerns associated with that? Can we offer meaningful worship to them in assisted living or nursing facilities? Your own profile speaks of evangelism and outreach as being the dual heartbeats of Jesus. What if our gifts and passions truly were the match that the desperate needs of the world sought? Wouldn't the heart of Christ beat strongly then?!

11. As Bishop how would you nourish and support all baptized people in their gifts and ministries to encourage diocesan outreach efforts?

The answer to this question follows naturally from the answer to the previous question about how dynamic evangelism occurs. The first step, in this case, would be to engage in a process of ensuring that all of the baptized are firmly grounded in their baptismal identities. A diocesan-wide instructional program on the Sacrament of Baptism would be helpful in enabling people to understand what they are renouncing and what they are promising when they step forward for baptism or when they renew their baptismal promises. What does Satan and all the spiritual forces which rebel against God look like in our current context and how do we renounce them? How do the evil powers of this world become embodied in institutional evil and how do we stand against that? What are the sinful desires, unique to each of us, that draw us away from the love of God? Are we committed to our faith communities, willing to gather weekly for breaking bread, praying, fellowship and learning? Are we committed to persevering against evil and to regular confession and repentance? Are we on board with evangelism and what it means to proclaim Jesus Christ by word and example? How can we be enabled to do that? Do we know and understand our neighbors and how we can serve them, and are we striving to respect the dignity of everyone? Additionally, a Diocesan-wide discernment program for ALL baptized people should be instituted. Just as persons discerning a vocation to Holy Orders, engage in a structured discernment program, all lay people should be afforded that same structured opportunity. Resources could be generated at the Diocesan level, with the help of the Commission on Ministry, and mutual discernment groups could be formed at the parish level and lay-led with minimal clergy supervision. Simultaneously, inquiries should be made into the surrounding community and neighborhood, with the help of easily obtainable demographic information, so as to determine potential areas of need and possible ministry. My strong suspicion is that as all of the baptized people discern their vocations and gifts, they will find that these are perfectly suited and matched for the needs that present themselves. This would give all churches the direction they would need in order to proceed with outreach – outreach and evangelism, the dual heartbeats of Jesus.

12. Why should the church struggle to be more diverse? What equips you help the church effectively deal with the challenges of becoming more diverse?

In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul said, “Although I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given to me to bring to the Gentiles the news of the boundless riches of Christ, and to make everyone see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things; so that through the

church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.” (Ephesians 3:8-11) The church must become more diverse because that is God’s plan – that the church must represent all that God created so that God’s wisdom (in all its rich variety) can be completely made manifest and expressed. But perhaps we should remind ourselves that it need not be such a struggle! Just as God gave Paul the grace to reach out to the Gentiles, God gives us the grace to reach out and include those who are not like us. So often we must be reminded that we do not engage in Christian endeavors alone but have unlimited grace available to us in order to accomplish our tasks. I have been privileged over the past several years to be engaged in some work on racial reconciliation. I have worked at the local level in study circles on race, worked in civil politics on lobbying for a hate crimes bill in our state (which is one of only five states in America who still does not have one), worked on implementing Bishop Curry’s Becoming Beloved Community curriculum in our Diocese. As an ally, I am active in local gatherings of the LGBTQ community. I am actively engaged in learning to speak Spanish so as to be able to reach out authentically to our Latina/Latino communities. In all of this I celebrate the richness of God’s diversity and marvel at the beauty of His extensive Creation!

13. As you have been discerning God’s call in this process, have you received any insight into what you might like to focus your attention upon during the first few months of your episcopate in the Diocese of Southern Virginia?

As I think about this, I become energized and am ready to begin! What I have discerned so far in this process is that Southern Virginia is a diocese that is ready to become connected and to continue in efforts to do the work God has called them to do using ALL of the gifts of ALL of the parishes and people. I have also discerned that you are a people who continues to want to build on the trust in the Diocesan Office which you have worked hard to repair. And I hear, loudly and clearly, that you long for a vision which will lead and guide you into fuller lives in Jesus Christ and complete expression and fulfillment of the promises made at your Baptism. This would include support, and discernment of vocation for lay and clergy alike.

Thus in the first few months of my Episcopate, I would focus in the following areas:

- A. Visiting and connecting with all parishes and their clergy/lay leadership
 - a) Yearly contact with each parish would be the goal
 - b) Each parish would be part of a three year cycle that would include a Sunday visitation one year, a week-night visitation another year (most likely with the Vestry) and a week-day offering of open office hours for anyone to visit and have conversation with the Bishop , either by appointment or walk-in during another year.
 - c) A schedule of this sort would commit me to seeing three parishes every week except when vacation or other episcopal duties take me out of town. Effectively, this would make personal connection the focus of my ministry. I would want to implement this sort of schedule for the first three years and then seek feedback from bodies like the Standing Committee and Convocation leadership as to its effectiveness.
 - d) A regular rotation of one-on-one contact with all clergy.
- B. Articulating and putting forth a clear vision (with the help of lay and clergy alike). Once I have spent some time in the Diocese and have come to understand its core values, I will be able to help articulate a clear sense of vision and a direction in which to move. With each visitation, meeting with a vestry, or open office hour day, I will learn the hopes and dreams of the Diocese and together we will be able to articulate and implement this vision. The goal would be to enable all of the baptized to live lives of meaning and purpose. We could expect to articulate and begin to implement such a vision by the end of the first year. Until then our focus would be on

strengthening our relationships with each other and with the Lord Jesus Christ through a Rule of Life that includes prayer, study of Scripture, frequent worship and acts of Charity.

- C. Development of a discernment program for laity. With the help of the Commission on Ministry, I would like to explore the development and implementation of a discernment and formation program for laity. The Diocesan Education for Ministry program which already exists would be a helpful part of this effort.

- D. Presence at youth events, especially summer camp and retreats. My ministry as a Bishop would be fed by the energy and enthusiasm of the youth, so I would want frequent contact with them! And I love summer camp!