

# EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF NH

*The Address Given to Diocesan Convention by  
The Right Reverend A. Robert Hirschfeld, Bishop of New Hampshire  
November 4, 2022*

Here we are. The evening of Friday, November 4. It's Annual Convention in 2022. We are gathered from around New Hampshire and others, watching on YouTube could be joining us from anywhere on the globe.

It's a season of days surrounding the Feast of All Saints' when we celebrate the whole communion of saints, past present and yet to come. We also have the great honor and joy to welcome our Presiding Bishop Michael Curry as our preacher tomorrow morning. In fact, he's with us even right now on Zoom. What a delight to welcome him to the Granite State and our Convention. Presiding Bishop, I can't wait to join you at the altar at the Capitol Center of the Arts tomorrow. We are so happy to have you here and immensely grateful for your leadership and witness to the Gospel as our Presiding Bishop, Primate, chief evangelist, spiritual leader, and prophet for the dream of God's Beloved Community. And you are a dear our friend and brother in Christ. Thank you for making this trip to be with us. We are deeply honored by your presence.

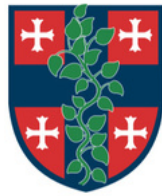
Earlier we acknowledged in humility and awe, the past Indigenous generations of the land on which we now live and move. Thank you, Derek for reading that statement recognizing the past peoples, at least those we know, who lived in this part of the world in ages past and in whose mysterious presence we are more and more aware as history is revealed to us.

So we have acknowledged what day and occasion it is in the common calendar and on the church calendar and in the wide span of history.

But what time is it, really? **What time is it on the clock of the world?**

It seems the world's clock is stuck in telling us that our life is just one dang thing after another, suffering after suffering, ordeal after another, crisis after crisis, war after war. There seems to be no end to the troubling and bad news. And, as it happens, I was just reminded that we are turn our clocks back one hour before we go to bed tomorrow night.

But what time does **Jesus** say it is? Well, of course, he didn't have a Timex or a Smartphone. But he knew what time it was...the time was at hand...the kingdom of God is at hand now. He seems to be inviting us to another kind of time.



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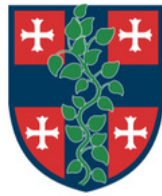
When we hear Jesus' list of those who are blessed (as we will tomorrow), he says that the poor, the hungry, the marginalized and the hated—those who thirst for righteousness, for justice — they are blessed, they are the privileged ones, they are exalted now... at this hour.

What time is it on the clock of the world is different question than what time is in the mind of God, in the mind of Christ. At his baptism by John at the Jordan River Jesus preached that the kingdom of God is now. And at the eve of his death, he announces the moment of his glory. Time on the world's clock is not in sync with Kingdom time. If we need any evidence of that, we get it when we read that the moment of his humiliation and betrayal, is exactly the moment he says he is being glorified. as soon as Judas leaves the upper room to bring in the Temple police and the centurians, Jesus says now is the hour for me to be glorified. By the world's clock that would be a moment of utter disgrace. But Jesus announces that it's the moment of his glory, of God's loving purpose of truth and justice intruding into our time. According to the world's clock, things look quite bleak and hopeless, but in God's time, at hand, all good things come to those who lack who are hungry, who long for righteousness and the justice of God's appearing, who suffer and grieve.

The world's clock also tells us that on Tuesday we will have an election. And there is great trepidation...we wait results, we are anxious for healing to our nation, we long for a peace that is grounded in justice and truth, a deeper peace than we've known recently...but we are also clear that things are probably going to get more tumultuous and troubled before they get more tranquil. As a nation, we are caught between choices of truth and untruth, between violence or democracy. That's the hour we're in.

AND we are also on the Kingdom time...God's time.

Earlier this fall, in the cycle of readings that we have in the Daily Office, we read again the powerful story of one of the most heroic of women in the whole bible when we read the Book of Esther. It was just after the fall of Babylon, and many jews remained in the region governed by the Persian Empire. A young woman from among the Jewish exiles caught the eye of the king and was welcomed into his court. But when an evil plot developed that would have led to the wholesale extermination of the Jews, Esther's father secretly asks her if it was not for such a time as this that she was placed by God to bear witness to the truth, to bear witness to justice on behalf of her people. **Could it be for such a time as this**, dear Esther that you are where you are to prevent this calamity from happening? So I ask us, could it be for such a time, on the clock of the world that God is calling us to be the body of Christ, to be agents of justice, of truth telling, of healing, of companionship with the hungry, the weak, the brokenhearted, the poor, and the misled. Esther answered the call, even when in doing so could have cost her position of privilege, her safety, even her life, because she knew she would not be spared the evil that was being planned.



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And it is for such a time as this that **we are here**. We will be here no matter who is elected, because God's mission, the mission we pursue, is to claim that the Spirit of God is upon us...to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor to set the captives free to repair, heal, and love. When Jesus cited these these words from the Book of Isaiah, he stressed that God's dream does not run according to the clock of the world, but on God's time, Kairos time. Today, Jesus says, this scripture fulfilled. To God, and God's church, the appointed hour is now.

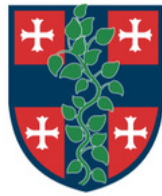
It is for such a time as this that our little Church, the Episcopal Church of New Hampshire, the Episcopal Church, is here. It is our time to proclaim the power of God, the reign of God, even though we (according to the clock of the world) appear to be smaller, less influential, less prestigious than it once thought of itself. None of us, none of us, has the whole solution to the complex issues facing us. I am more and more convinced that no human effort alone, can cure and solve all our ills. Only love, only divine love, the love that Jesus offers and pours out in his life and in his death can spring us from the traps in which we are all — each of us — ensnared. And the way of Jesus' love, as my teacher and bishop Michael has proclaimed throughout the world, to audiences high and low, has a multiplying and amplifying effect.

If the time is now, how do we move forward, when it all might seem too much, too big, too overwhelming? By focusing first on the small things.

Ministry in Jesus is all about small things. In fact, the word ministry is related to the words miniscule, or diminish, or minimize. Everything Jesus does is centered on the small things: a few loaves and fishes, a piece of bread, a cup of wine, a conversation with one woman at a well, an encounter with a one leper, one blind man, one child who has died, one man festering in a tomb, a meeting with one woman in a Garden by a stone that was rolled a way, a walk with two others on the road to Emmaus.

And yet, for some reason our church is fixated on the big things. ASA Average Sunday Attendance overshadows our AWE: Average Weekly Encounters with the Presence of God: one on one, one healing by one healing. One meal by one meal. One mind made calm by one kind word, or an invitation to lunch. As I learned from my involvement with the mental health community, sharing a story with a trusted soul saves lives.

And hearing the truth of our history can bring us closer to the Beloved Community. In the small group discussions of Sacred Ground circles participants are invited to walk through chapters of America's history of race and racism, while weaving in threads of family story, economic class, and political and regional identity. If you haven't yet walked on the Sacred Ground of these discussion, or want go even deeper, you are invited to join our friends from the diocese of Maine, Vermont, and Alabama in the coming year.



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**In God's time, small things, no-bodies, are God's preferred material to re-make a world.** The moments when God takes beings of little worth or importance and transforms them are called Kairos moments, sacred times, when eternity breaks into our time, and God's does wondrous things. That's how God keeps time.

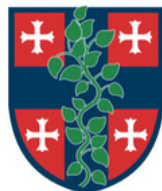
That is why we are considering making room and celebrating a new designation in our canons tonight...for the creation of Gospel Oriented Communities...smaller ways that God can grow among us, unburdened by the weight of a large church that sometimes besides our best intention can hamper a seedling community of seekers who want to be disciples. Who then, by the power of God's love, help heal and re-knit the torn fabric of our world. Even our larger churches, can only continue to be thrive when they are also small---offering small groups of prayer, study, prayer partnerships of two or three. Every large movement in the church has begun, or has been renewed, by careful attention to the smallest relationship in which we find ourselves face-to-face with the Risen Christ.

As we face the economic stresses of our time, we have also created a small School for Ministry which allows us to form and equip those called to lead, preach, teach, and worship with sufficient knowledge and confidence to build communities.

We have initiated a capital campaign, right-sized and humble for a diocese our size, called From Deep Roots, New Life, to support our ministry well into the future. So far we've conducted a very thorough feasibility study and our realistic hope in the next year to reach \$2 million. We hope that God will bless this campaign and that many will support with gifts - there is no gift too small for this project, they will have multiplying benefits in our future.

Last month, when at St. Thomas, Hanover, I began the practice of giving to each person being confirmed or received, a small kit containing an acorn with a set of instructions to sprout a seedling. This is a small but meaningful action in response to the Call for Creation Care that came out of Lambeth that we restore the health of the earth, tree by tree.

These small but meaningful decisions - reusable shopping bag by reusable shopping bag, every head of lettuce or broccoli grown locally, every time we choose to spare a gallon of gas or wear a sweater to save a gallon of heating fuel, one solar panel or wind turbine at a time - can have multiplying effects on the world, on God's creation.



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Do not be cowed by the loud tolling clock of the world, tolling calamity after calamity. We can proclaim that the kingdom of God is here **now**. And we are here **now**. In such a time as this, each of us, in our small and seemingly insignificant decisions and isolated actions coming together, yes, vote by vote, by the multiplying power of God's love, has a role, has a purpose: to claim the power of God's love—in our worship, in our learning, and in our service—as we share the love and joy of Jesus Christ with others.