

House of Deputies president calls for deeper sense of mission

By Melodie Woerman

(Episcopal News Service) House of Deputies President Bonnie Anderson called deputies and bishops to a deeper sense of mission to the poor in her opening presentation to General Convention July 7.

Anderson, who is serving her first term as presiding officer of the House of Deputies, said this commitment to mission has to occur because of, not in spite of, today's tough economic times.

She said that those who attended the previous 75 General Conventions could have described their own tough times, but she said today's struggles are different because they are globally visible. "Our technology enables us to see and to know not only how we are affected," she said, "but how the global economic crisis disproportionately affects the poorest people in the world. It is within our reach to do something about that, and that is the toughest thing about our tough times."



Anderson applauded the dioceses and parishes that have made a committed to mission through the Millennium Development Goals – an eight-pronged effort to halve global poverty by 2015 – but said that to close the gap between the needs of the world and the response of the church, the Episcopal Church needs the efforts of those outside its walls. "We must no longer be afraid to ask other people to join us in action," she said. Public narrative, a tool being taught to General Convention deputies and bishops to help tell their faith stories, has great capacity to help church members engage others in action on behalf of mission, she said.

Anderson said her own faith journey started in a mostly Hispanic Roman Catholic neighborhood in Santa Ana, California, not far from the site of this year's General Convention in Anaheim. She said she was "the white kid from divorced parents who lived with her mother and sometimes her grandmother." In spite of those differences, she said, her neighborhood "...not only welcomed me, they embraced me." She said, "There was always room at someone's table when I was hungry. When I was lonely there was sometimes somebody at the back door yelling that it was time to walk to church."

But Anderson said 15 years of attending Mass every single day still left her a stranger to many in the congregation. "There was not one single adult associated with the leadership of the parish who knew my name," she said. "I was told about Jesus Christ at church, but I experienced Jesus Christ in my neighborhood."

That journey brought her to the Episcopal Church 35 years ago through the efforts of a congregation that not only welcomed her deeply but helped her see how her gifts could be put to use. "God put me in the midst of a loving community of people who showed what it is to love my neighbor as myself," she said.

That intersection between faith and mission is an essential part of one's Christian identity, Anderson said. "We find our place in creation where the story of Jesus Christ intersects our own stories."

The full text of Anderson's address is available [here](#).