

AR Diocesan Convention 2026

Keynote Speaker - Rt. Rev. Melissa Skelton

"Episcopal and Proud of It: Exploring a Magnetic and Life-giving Congregational Identity"

What is Episcopal identity? Why is it important?

Recall the story of our tradition, both the positive (Hooker?) and the negative (legacy of colonization and racism - both indigenous and slavery - that came with it

The Need Today - remind and appreciate our positive identity (inclusion, community support, etc) without minimizing the negative history.

In "The Vocation of Anglicanism," Paul Avis identifies the five tensions of Anglicanism:

- 1) catholic and reformed
- 2) episcopal and synodial
- 3) universal and local
- 4) biblical and reasonable
- 5) traditional and fresh insight

Holds together what we believe God intends to belong together- "in order that it may hold people together."

Episcopal Identity

- 1) Biblical - our ongoing story
- 2) Liturgical and Sacramental - Daily Office and Holy Eucharist bring us together
- 3) Mystical - faith and conversion is a journey, be willing to be surprised by God, sacredness
- 4) Creation-loving - stewardship of the Earth
- 5) History and Heritage - value both ancient roots and living tradition
- 6) Communal - in community we are formed, renewed, saved; where we find our place, past-present-future
- 7) Patience and Spiritual Modesty - wait for sacred insights; we hold no claim to a final answer; "God is always larger than our explanations."
- 8) Both-And Thinking - as opposed to either-or, appreciate perspectives
- 9) Loving the Questions - questions take us more deeply into an experience with God
- 10) Joy and Wonder - God give us joy and invites us into experiences of wonder
- 11) Rhythm and Balance - nothing in extreme, Godly prayer-work-rest-study-play, "the normal life lived well" Emerson(?)
- 12) Beauty as a path to God - a window unto and a path to the Divine, we are invited into the beauty of God
- 13) Justice - calls us to honor the dignity of all through our own personal and communal behavior and through working to reform unjust systems

