



Intro: You're listening to Crossings Conversations from Church Divinity School of the Pacific, a show about leaders creating Christian community and sharing God's love.

Kyle Oliver: This is Kyle Oliver, Communications and Marketing Manager at Church Divinity School of the Pacific. Excuse me, I'm going to say that again. I'm here with the most Reverend Katharine Jefferts Schori, the 26th presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church. Before that, she was the ninth Bishop of Nevada, and after that for a time, she was Assisting Bishop in San Diego. Bishop Katharine, thank you so much for being with us.

Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori: Well, delighted to be with you.

Kyle: This is a conversation about leadership formation. The first question we wanted to ask the folks participating in this is about how our guests' understandings of leadership formation have changed somewhere along the line, at whatever time you think might be relevant. I'm curious, how have you seen leadership formation changing in the church in your time?

Bishop Katharine: The formation for ordained leadership in the Episcopal Church has changed enormously during the time that I've been pursuing that path. My seminary experience included a year at a Roman Catholic Benedictine Seminary to which I commuted every day for a year, and then two years at Church Divinity School of the Pacific. It was revolutionary enough in the time that I did it, that there was a lot of pushback from the Diocesan structure about doing that.

I think we see a much greater interest in distance leadership, distance formation linked with residential formation. I think it provides an opportunity for people to continue to be formed within their sending communities, not to be decultured in some sense completely so they retain that contextual significance. I think that's been enormously effective.

We're also seeing lots of creative and innovative ways of participating in other communities during the time of formation for ordained leadership. I think that's got lots of potential going forward, working a in ministry in the community that may be radically different from what the church has done, at least in recent memory, rather than primarily within the seminary box. CDSP has been a great example of multiple avenues and venues for formation. I think that's just incredibly important. If we don't continue to evolve, we die.

Kyle: So this notion that one's field of education experience in seminary is in a congregation for the purposes of brushing up skills for parish priesthood, we're in the process of expanding that notion. That's what I hear you saying?

Bishop Katharine: Absolutely. I'll give you an example. When I was the Bishop of Nevada, we sent a student for a seminary interview. She wasn't actually a student yet, but the seminary called me up during her interview to say, "We don't think we can take this person because she wants to do hospital chaplaincy." I said, "No, she has a vocation for hospital chaplaincy. You need to form her in the skills that she's going to need to do that, whether you've done that before or not." [chuckles]

That's been shifting in important ways. Virginia, I think has done a lot of work with people who want to be school chaplains, educational chaplains. I think General's provided an opportunity for that. Opportunities to be formed in other cultural communities of all sorts, I think are incredibly important in this day and age.

Kyle: You've mentioned a story or two already, and I know that you are retired now, but I'm curious if there are other stories that you are hearing from seminarians or from recent graduates, or other new leaders in the church that make you hopeful for our leadership and for where we might be heading together?

Bishop Katharine: I'll start with a counterexample. I was visiting another seminary a number of years ago, talking to a group of students. One of them, with great lamination, said, "I need to have a full-time job. I just can't understand this possibility that I won't get full-time salary." I said to this young woman, "Well, your bishop sends you to be formed because that's what we expect God is doing in your lives right now."

The course of one's ordained ministry looks radically different in different contexts. In the early church, when there were bishops, you went and probably lived at the bishop's household and followed the bishop around [chuckles] to learn how you were going to do what you were going to do. Like, Paul, you probably had to have another way of supporting yourself financially, but we in this era have had to expand our understanding of what ordained ministry looks like.

There are no promises about what it's going to look like. You need to come with courage and a sense of vocation, and go and try something that will build the reign of God in this place.

I'm seeing remarkable examples of people going into communities and developing something new, a new form of church, if you will. That's just incredibly promising.

Kyle: What are some of the forms of church that you've seen that intrigue you?

Bishop Katharine: I went to visit Bushwick Abbey after it had been in existence for six or seven weeks. That was an amazing experience. The congregation of 40 or 45 was about two thirds young men, which we don't see very often, other than in military academies. [laughs] They were living in a music venue that was a bar during the week, and on Sunday morning, they had a sign on the sidewalk that said, "Bushwick Abbey, church that doesn't suck."

[laughter]

Bishop Katharine: They would say to you, "We meet at noon because it's late enough to sleep in and sober up. We're here for the community that exists in this place." Almost immediately, they started by feeding people who were hungry in the neighborhood around them.

Kyle: Wow. Talk about being formed for different kinds of cultures than what we've imagined the church convening and participating in the past. That's a great example. Other stories that stick out or we can move on?

Bishop Katharine: I continue to be inspired by the courage of many younger leaders to start something new. They pay attention to what's going on in the community and they listen to the yearning and the hopes of people around them, and then attempt to respond to that rather than bringing something that's pre-packaged. [laughs]

Kyle: Let's move on to this next question which we hope is a fun one. We've been encouraging people to think big, think outside the box. If you were able to commission, and maybe you'd be involved in this course, maybe not, but if you were able to commission some course with any instructor in the world, someone that you'd like to have in front of a classroom or alongside a classroom of seminarians, who would you invite to teach and what would you call the course or what would you have them working on?

Bishop Katharine: I got to do something like that a while ago at CDSP, in one context talking about what seminarians needed to learn about science in the world around us right at that point. It was incredibly fruitful. Just looking at the social contextual issues that are affecting everybody, climate being an essential one right now that's affecting CDSP, the whole West, the whole world. We recognize and pay attention to that.

I think a course around leadership, what the necessary charisms are, and how they can be cultivated. I'm reading a fascinating book right now called the *15 Commitments Of Conscious Leadership*. It's really designed for the work world, for the corporate world, but it's talking about issues of spiritual homelessness most centrally.

"Don't participate in gossip. Keep your commitments to your fullest ability. Tell the truth about everything. Share your emotional life as is appropriate, and it's more appropriate than most of us recognize and are willing to do. I think tapping the wisdom of the world

around us beyond the church box because people are hungry for spiritual disciplines. I think to grow their capacity to be more truly human.

Kyle: There's such a rich dialogue between the various faith traditions, understandings of what that might mean and all these so many other communities understandings of that. That's helpful. I'm a Doctoral Student at Teachers College, the School of Education at Columbia. It's been so rich to go, very much identifying as a religious educator, but knowing that I will be learning from quote unquote secular educators.

I have found that in every turn, anytime I'm afraid that I'm getting too religious on my colleagues, that I'm talking about some matter of religious content that is relevant to my work or what have you. Every time I think I've gone too far into that they're like, "Oh, we want to hear more. Oh we're curious."

It's important in this conversation we asked, folks if we could make a change at the seminary level, at the church wide level, however you want to tackle this. What's one change we could make about how leaders are trained that you think would make a positive difference for the church?

Bishop Katherine: I think more exposure to other cultural contexts. I think that's part of what Black Lives Matter is about, but it's also I think much in need of exposure to other international contexts. If you had a semester in Colombia or in Haiti, or in Japan, I think that would be an enormous blessing not only for the Anglican Communion, but for local congregations to get a broader understanding of what the church is. It's much bigger and more complex and diverse than any of us really recognize.

Kyle: I imagine your time as Presiding Bishop offered lots of opportunities to embody that lesson, that reality. Are there memories or stories that stick out for you there? Things you learned in other contexts that have stuck with you?

Bishop Katherine: Well, for some reason the church in the Philippines is coming to mind. There are two members of the Church in the Philippines with which we're in full communion. The former dioceses that used to be part of the Episcopal Church and the Philippine Independent Church, which formed about 1900.

The Philippine Independent Church is amazingly contextual outside the cities. It respects the more ancient traditions of the peoples. In that sense it's somewhat like Navajoland or the Lakota, recognizing the wisdom of their traditional spiritual practices. The great humor of the people in the Philippines, especially in the Independent Church. I visited one congregation where the bishop told me that the IHS on the pulpit said to me, "Here this means one hour sermon."

We went up island to a really small place where I think there were five bishops there and a congregation of 80, something like that. They weren't they were celebrating two dioceses doing work together. After the service, the coffee hour, if you will, was men dancing with brass gongs, people eating. They were in a traditional dress which would probably have scandalized the buttoned up Episcopalians in the US, but nearly naked

celebrating their traditional culture in the context of Christianity. It was just an incredible blessing to see something like that.

Kyle: Before we let you go we have one more concluding question that we are asking everyone, and that's for a piece of advice. We often are advised as clergy to do less advice-giving, but here we're asking. What advice would you have for a seminary contemplating its future mission and its future role? How should we be trying to understand ourselves in new ways?

Bishop Katherine: I think CDSP has been pretty good at that. I think it means being curious and being willing to explore things that haven't seemed normal before. It's a process of evolution. The creatures and communities that are around for the long haul continue to adapt and evolve. I think CDSP continues to do creative growth in that way.

Kyle: Yeah, that makes sense. Anything else you'd like to share about leadership formation in the Church today?

Bishop Katherine: I think the piece of wisdom I would close with is that, it's supposed to be lifelong. It's intended to start with a seven-week-old that you're stewarding right now [laughs] and continue to the oldest Centenarian that we can find, because there's always more to learn, and discover, and grow into.

Kyle: That's a great note to end on. Bishop Katherine, thank you so much for being with us, and for sharing your wisdom on this project.

Bishop Katherine: Thank you for doing it.

Outro: Crossings Conversations is a co-productions of Church Divinity School of the Pacific and Trinity Church Wall Street. If you enjoyed the show, please rate and review it on Apple Podcasts or share it with a colleague. You can more about the only Episcopal seminary on the west coast and subscribe to Crossings Magazine at cdsp.edu