**North Carolina Bishop Michael Curry elected as 27th Presiding Bishop**

 The Episcopal Church’s General Convention made history June 27 when it chose [Diocese of North Carolina](http://www.dionc.org/) Bishop Michael Curry to be its 27th presiding bishop.

Curry, 62, was elected by the House of Bishops from a slate of four nominees on the first ballot.

He received 121 votes of a total 174 cast. Diocese of Southwest Florida Bishop Dabney Smith recieved 21, Diocese of Southern Ohio Bishop Thomas Breidenthal, 19, and Diocese of Connecticut Bishop Ian Douglas, 13. The number of votes needed for election was 89.

He will serve a nine-year term that officially begins Nov. 1. On that date, Curry will succeed current Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori and he will become the first person of color to hold that position.

“Oh, God love ya,” Curry said when he got to the microphone on the dais. “I know you haven’t had lunch so, no sermons now.”

 “It really is a blessing and privilege to serve our church and to serve our Lord in this way,” he said. “I treasure this church, this house, the House of Bishops, all of us. We are God’s children.”

Curry said The Episcopal Church is “the church where I learned about Jesus.”

“This is a good and wonderful church and we are good and wonderful people and I thank God to be one of the baptized among you,” Curry said, adding, “My heart is really full.”

“We’ve got a society where there are challenges before us and there are crises all around us. And the church has challenges before it,” he said. “We got a God and there really is a Jesus, and we are part of the Jesus Movement. Nothing can stop the movement of God’s love in this world”

Curry has been North Carolina’s 11th diocesan bishop since he was ordained and consecrated on June 17, 2000. He was the rector of St. James’ Episcopal Church, Baltimore, Maryland, when he was elected to the see on Feb. 11, 2000. He is also the current chair of Episcopal Relief & Development’s Board of Directors.

This makes the second time in a row that the General Convention made history with its election of a presiding bishop. In 2006, Jefferts Schori became the first woman ever [elected](http://archive.episcopalchurch.org/3577_76174_ENG_HTM.htm) presiding bishop of The Episcopal Church. She was also the first female among the primates, or ordained leaders, of the Anglican Communion’s 38 provinces, a distinction she still holds.

“We are followers of Jesus – Jesus of Nazareth – and the truth is we’ve got a message to proclaim, a life to live and something to share and offer the world,” he said. “There’s a lot of suffering in this world. There’s a lot of heartache, there’s a lot of nightmare. We are people who believe that God has a dream and a vision for this world, and that Jesus has shown us how to follow him in the direction of that and how to help this world live into God’s dream and vision for us now.

“Our work is actually the work of participating in the Jesus movement, which seeks to realize God’s dream and seeks to accomplish God’s mission in this world,” Curry said.

The church must help form disciples who will live like Jesus, Curry said. Such formation must become a priority so that the church is not just creating members, but disciples of Jesus “who actually live out and struggle to live out the teachings of Jesus in their lives, and make a tangible difference” in the world. If such churchwide formation combined with Episcopalians’ individual commitments to imitate Jesus, “we would transform this world,” Curry said.

“After formation, there’s evangelism and I know sometimes folks are afraid of that word, but I’m not talking about evangelism like other folk do it,” he said. “I am talking about the kind of evangelism that is as much listening as it is sharing.” Being present with another person and listening to that person is a “transforming possibility” of invitation and welcome.

Episcopalians must also be willing to “witness in the social sphere, witness in the public sphere, through personal service that helps somebody along the way … prophesying deliverance … [and] being a voice for those who have no voice,” Curry said.

To do this, Episcopalians need to partner with Anglicans around the world along with people of other faith traditions, according to Curry.

And “we need to create organizational structures that serve the mission, that help the institution and the church become a vessel of the Jesus movement,” he concluded.

**The roles of the presiding bishop**The presiding bishop is primate and chief pastor of the church, chair of the Executive Council, and president of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society. The canonical outline of the presiding bishop’s election and term can be found in Title I Section 2 of the church’s [Canons](http://www.episcopalarchives.org/pdf/CnC/CandC_2012pp11-62.pdf).

Curry’s election comes near the start of a meeting of General Convention that is considering a number of proposals to change some aspects of the governance and management of the church-wide [structure](http://www.generalconvention.org/gc/2015-resolutions?cid=587) and, hence, the roles and responsibilities of the presiding bishop.

According to Title I Section 2 in its current form, the presiding bishop is “charged with responsibility for leadership in initiating and developing the policy and strategy in the church and speaking for the Church as to the policies, strategies and programs authorized by the General Convention.”

The presiding bishop also “speaks God’s word to the church and world as the representative of this Church and its episcopate in its corporate capacity,” represents The Episcopal Church to the Anglican Communion, serves as chief consecrator of bishops, and leads the House of Bishops. He or she also holds a significant role in the discipline and changes in status of bishops.

Also, the presiding bishop exercises a significant role in the governance of the church by making appointments to various governing bodies, making decisions with the president of the House of Deputies, serving as a member of every churchwide committee and commission, and serving as chair and president of key church governing boards. He or she is the chief executive officer of the [Executive Council](http://www.generalconvention.org/ec), which carries out the programs and policies adopted by the General Convention, according to Canon I.4 (1)(a). Therefore, the presiding bishop is responsible for staff and operations of the Episcopal Church Center, with the exception of the executive office of the General Convention.

In its [“Call to Discernment and Profile”](https://extranet.generalconvention.org/staff/files/download/10876.pdf), the joint nominating committee said the 27th presiding bishop would need to be “comfortable in the midst of ambiguity and able to lead the church in the rich, temporal space between the ‘now,’ and the ‘yet to come.’” The person discerned and elected by the church would need to “delight” in the diversity of a “multi-national, multi-lingual, multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-generational church.” And, because “our polity has many components and complexities,” the 27th presiding bishop will need the “skills and wisdom for leading complex and democratic systems through a time of significant change.”

Historically, the office of presiding bishop was filled automatically by the most senior bishop in the House of Bishops, measured by date of consecration, beginning with the presidency of William White at the first session of the 1789 General Convention. That process changed in 1925 when the church elected the Rt. Rev. John Gardner Murray as the 16th presiding bishop.