**Annual Report for 2023 of the President of Province III**

The Rev. Nathaniel W. Pierce

We were blessed with strong leadership in 2023 by our Provincial Coordinator, the Rev. Dr. Pamela Cochran, and by our Coordinators in all nine of our area ministries:

Altar Guild – Coordinator: Ms. Sharon Stewart Nachman (VA)

Campus Ministries – Coordinator: the Rev. Dr. Ted Christopher (CPA)

Christian Formation & Youth Ministry – Coordinator: Ms. Joanne Fisher (Easton) &

Mrs. Kate Riley (MD)

Ecumenical Affairs – Coordinator: the Rev. John Downey (PA)

Episcopal Church Women – Coordinator: Ms. Nancy Sands (SVA)

Environmental Stewardship – Coordinator: Mr. Steven Jones (DE)

Racial Justice, Reconciliation, & Anti-Racism – Coordinators: the Rev. Chris McCloud (MD), the Rev. David Wacaster (EDOW); Dr. Frances Dannenberg (Pittsburgh); Dr. Enid LaGesse (EDOW)

United Thank Offering – Coordinator: Ms. Mathy Milling Downing (EDOW)

Province III responded to General Convention’s resolution C007, which encouraged all dioceses and parishes, in cooperation with other judicatories and local communities of faith, to honor **Harriet Ross Tubman** on the 110th anniversary of her death (March 10, 2023) in a worship service on or close to that date. We invited parishes and dioceses to apply for a grant of up to $1,000 per diocese within the Province to support local commemorations on her new, separate feast day on the Episcopal Calendar of the Church Year. Four grants were awarded:

* **Central Pennsylvania**, for “Leaders & Liberators: Honoring Harriet Tubman and her Columbia Connections,” held in partnership with the Bishop Nathan Baxter Chapter of the Union of Black Episcopalians, Saint James Episcopal Church in Lancaster, Saint Paul Episcopal in Columbia, & Mount Zion African Methodist Episcopal Church in Columbia.
* **Southern Virginia**, for “Following in Tubman's Painful, but Determined Footsteps,” hosted by James Solomon Russell Chapter of Union of Black Episcopalians.
* **Delaware**, for an ecumenical program, with participation of Presbyterians, Saint Andrews Boarding School, and Temple Beth El, and hosted by St. Barnabas.
* **Pittsburgh**, for a program highlighting the Underground Railroad in Pittsburgh, hosted by their Commission on Race and Reconciliation.

Province III joined with the DFMS in sponsoring an **Episcopal Youth Event (EYE)** on July 4-8, 2023, at the University of Maryland. Almost 600 young people met at the University of Maryland, College Park, to worship and learn about God and enjoy fellowship at the Episcopal Youth Event. The youth from Province III arrived a day early for additional bonding, including a special tour of the National Cathedral, and to help welcome those coming from around the country. Jenni Faires, one of the chaperones from Southwestern Virginia, put together a highlight video of the event.

Plans for a conference in 2024 on **Title IV** were announced. Chancellor to the Presiding Bishop, Mary Kostel, and Chancellor to the Bishop of Newark, Diane Sammons, will lead a Province-wide Title IV training at the Maritime Conference Center on Saturday, February 10, 2024. This event is by invitation of the Bishop of each diocese for those who have a diocesan role in the Title IV process including Intake Officers and members of a Disciplinary Board.

The 2023 Synod voted to donate $1,300 to **“The Philadelphia Eleven” documentary**, $100 in honor of each one of our 13 dioceses. The producers of this documentary, about the [11 women who broke down barriers](https://mclist.us8.list-manage.com/track/click?u=df8a48d937d3a0fcd638974b4&id=ed669b2afd&e=d30c239b5a) in The Episcopal Church to become its first female priests, plan to complete the film in time for the 50th anniversary of this event in July 2024.

The annual meeting of the Province III **Episcopal Church Women** was held on July 21-22, 2023 at Roslyn Conference & Retreat Center in Richmond, VA. The theme was *Seen, Heard, Connected and Invited: ECW in a Changing World*, and the keynote speaker was the Rt. Rev. Susan Goff, Bishop Suffragan, retired, of the Diocese of Virginia.

Province III endorsed two projects for funding by the DFMS:

**The Diocese of Southwestern Virginia was awarded a $20,000 Constable Fund Grant** to support development of a pilot character development program at the Boys Home of Virginia for youth throughout the diocese and beyond.

**The Diocese of Central Pennsylvania was awarded a $25,000 Roanridge Grant** to support a curriculum review, cohort program development, facilitators, and underwriting costs to help equip a new generation of lay preachers and worship leaders at Stevenson School for Ministry. While the Stevenson School is a ministry of the Diocese of Central Pennsylvania, the dioceses of Bethlehem, Maryland, and Pittsburgh are partners on the project.

Province III awarded a grant of $2,000 to the Claggett Center, which is the camp, conference, and retreat center of the Diocese of Maryland, that operates in ministry partnership with the Episcopal Diocese of Washington. The grant was used to provide **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) training** for its camp counselors during the 2024 summer season, with the goal of providing all campers with access and resources to support their growth and incentivizing people from marginalized communities to apply for summer staff.

The Dioceses of Pittsburgh, Bethlehem, Central Pennsylvania, and Maryland continue to collaborate on a new **certification program for lay ministers** offered by The Stevenson School for Ministry. The year-long training is for those interested in being a lay preacher or lay worship leader. The training includes Introduction to the New Testament, introduction to the Hebrew Scriptures, Prayer Book Studies, Homiletics 1 (for lay preachers), and Becoming Beloved Community training.

**Formation Deep Dives** were renewed in 2023. During these hour-long sessions, youth workers and Christian formation educators gather over zoom to discuss a specific topic. Prior topics have included intergenerational worship, Covid-safe event planning, technology and the post-pandemic church, seasonal educational idea sharing, self-care, and the General Convention. The first gathering was held on Monday, November 13; Lisa Kimball led a discussion on *Baptized for Life*. What does it really mean to be *Baptized for Life* at a time in the United States when religious affiliation in general, and Christian church attendance in particular, are at historically low levels? What did we (Virginia Theological Seminary) learn about forming baptized lives of meaning and purpose by accompanying 17 congregations over five years?

Province III announced plans for our 2024 Youth Event 2024 on April 5-7 at the [Caroline Furnace Camp and Retreat Center,](https://wordpress.us8.list-manage.com/track/click?u=df8a48d937d3a0fcd638974b4&id=493fa00fb2&e=d30c239b5a) Fort Valley, Virginia, open to Grades 6-12. High School Juniors and Seniors have been invited to join the Design Team to help plan and lead PYE24.

We have fully integrated our elected representatives to the **DFMS Executive Council** into the structure of Province III: both are voting members of the Provincial Council (aka the Executive Committee of the Synod) and have seat and voice at the meetings of our Synod.

Under the leadership of our **Environmental Stewardship Coordinator**, Mr. Steven Jones, Province III is taking the lead among faith institutions to intentionally support regional farmers during this year’s 81st General Convention in Louisville by featuring farm fresh regional and local food during the week-long event. This effort will connect regional farmers with Convention caterers, signaling alignment and support for those small to mid-scale farms which pivoted and played a significant role in keeping food flowing during the pandemic in 2020. Small to midscale food producers have, on average, a higher regional economic impact as their income circulates more within their respective communities. At a granular level, they strengthen natural systems leading to increases in soil and water quality, sequestering more carbon and supporting high quality crops for communities. These local farmers have played, in many instances, an unsung role in community resilience which has and continues to produce a ripple-effect, which underscores the church’s Creation Care and Environmental Justice ministry and Province III’s Environmental Stewardship mission.

Province III continues to experience the challenge of coping with the benign neglect of our Provincial ministry and mission by the DFMS.

I have thoroughly enjoyed my ten years of involvement with this Province, first as your representative to Executive Council, then as Vice President and now President for the past two years. As I approach my 82nd birthday, it is time to step aside and welcome younger leadership. In the words of the Psalmist (*1928 BCP*, 129:8), I wish you “good luck in the name of the Lord.”

Respectfully submitted,

The Rev. Nathaniel W. Pierce, President of Province III