

THE ARCHBISHOP'S 2023 ANNUAL SUMMER ESSAY CONTEST

First Place Winner

Priest/Deacon

What does it mean to be a global Anglican today?

The Venerable Canon Justin Murff

It's fair to say that Anglicans love history. We love worshiping in a historical tradition and upholding the faith once received from the Apostles. We look back and remember key moments of our history as a church and as a tradition. We honor the great heroes of Faith who reformed the English church. We recall those who led in the creation of the church, the mission society that sent out the great missionaries of the 18th and 19th centuries that brought the gospel of Jesus Christ to all corners of the Earth, helping to establish the global Anglican communion that has become the third largest Christian denomination in the world behind the Catholic and Orthodox churches.

Make no mistake, history is a good thing, but it's important to remember that our history is a reference point that should direct us toward our present reality and future endeavors. Inspired by the past and guided by the Holy Spirit, we should all look to the present and the future at what the Anglican Church is and should be.

And thanks to the missionary endeavors of Anglican lay and clergy alike who have gone before us, the global Anglican Church includes countries representing hundreds of people groups and languages. When I think about the current global Anglican Church, I often remember the 117th Psalm.

“Praise the Lord, all nations!

Him, all people! For great is his steadfast love toward us, and the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever. Praise the Lord!”

When I think about what it means to be a global Anglican today, I am thankful that, like the Psalmist beautifully commands, we are people of praise.

We praise the Lord on every continent of the Earth. Whether I am worshiping in the beautiful All Saints cathedral in Cairo, or Kigali, Rwanda, home to the Chairman of the Global Anglican Future Conference, or if visiting one of our more than 300 Anglican Chaplains serving in the Jurisdiction of the Armed forces and Chaplaincy serving all over the world in a variety of assignments, We are united globally in our common praise and worship of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Global Anglicans are a people of praise.

In serving overseas, my travels regularly take me to countries throughout the Middle East and North Africa. I worship and fellowship with our Anglican brothers and sisters in some of the most hostile places on earth to the Christian faith. I have been so blessed by fellowshiping with our fellow brothers and sisters worldwide. I am amazed at their steadfast commitment to the gospel, and I have seen and experienced firsthand the never-ending, unending, ever-present love of Christ. The warmth, love, and hospitality that so many feel when they come to our parish is the same feeling I experience every time I visit one of our sister churches around the world. It's incredible to be a part of a global family and to join together in praise and worship nits our hearts closer together, and that's why I truly wish every single person here today to Journey at some point in their life either physically or even digitally to fellowship and worship with another parish somewhere around the world.

On my most recent trip to Egypt, I enjoyed serving in the oldest Protestant church in Cairo and at All Saint's Cathedral. The worship service was conducted in Arabic, and yet I was able to follow along as we happened to use the same prayer book, although in different languages. I sat in the back of the cathedral, and I watched as Sudanese believers gathered for worship and danced and sang and rejoiced. Amid tremendous heartache, hardship, and pain. Between ongoing persecution and the recent Civil War, their community has exponentially grown, and the needs can sometimes be overwhelming. There were days when I would come out and see the cathedral courtyard filled with Sudanese refugees who had come to the Cathedral because they knew this was a place where they could find shelter, refuge, and hope. And as the service for the Sudanese began, for that brief moment, their pain was replaced with praise, and songs of joy rose from deep inside their souls as they worshiped God and celebrated our Eucharist together. I was

reminded that there is power in praise. In life's painfilled moments, in the most difficult circumstances, when you've lost everything and had everything taken from you, we can still praise the Lord.

The 150th Psalm says, "Praise the Lord! Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens! Praise him for his mighty deeds; praise him according to his excellent greatness! Praise him with trumpet sound; praise him with lute and harp! Praise him with tambourine and dance; praise him with strings and pipe! Praise him with sounding cymbals; praise him with loud clashing cymbals! Let everything that has breath praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!"

I'm so thankful that as global Anglicans, we are, most definitely, a people of praise.

Being a Global Anglican also means being a people on mission. We are unapologetically, unreservedly, unwaveringly committed to sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ with a lost and hurting world, be it in our own back yard or halfway around the world.

The Psalmist in Psalm 117 encourages us to extol the Lord, in other words, to praise enthusiastically, to wax lyrical about, to sing the praises of, to heap praise on, to rave about, to enthuse over, to gush over, to acclaim, proclaim, and to go on about the Lord.

The Anglican poet and psalmist Henry Lyte so eloquently extolled the Lord through his many beautiful hymns. One such hymn also powerfully proclaims the Gospel message in praise by saying:

Praise, my soul, the King of heaven; to his feet your tribute bring. Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven, evermore his praises sing. Alleluia, alleluia! Praise the everlasting King!

In a world filled with hurt and strife, anger and pain, in an age where many feel hope is hard to find and we have a generation that is searching for identity, purpose, and meaning - the world, now more than ever, needs to hear the good news of Jesus Christ. People need to know of his death, burial, and resurrection. The world needs to know that they have been ransomed by Christ, forgiven of their sins by his atoning death, and that through a relationship with Jesus, they can be healed and restored in right relationship with God, the Father almighty, through the power of the Holy Spirit. The Psalmist wrote

For great is his steadfast love toward us, and the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever.

Global Anglicans are on mission not just by preaching the word of God but also through serving and loving others, as Christ has commanded us to do.

We are seeing the faithfulness of the Lord as He blesses the amazing work of Biblically faithful Anglican ministries around the world.

From running schools and early childhood centers, world-class hospitals, and mobile medical clinics serving the poor, from administrating refugee relief centers to establishing schools for the deaf, from establishing media centers that produce digital media reaching people from non-Christian backgrounds to educating elected officials and defending the oppressed and persecuted the world over - global Anglicans are on mission in a variety of ways that are changing the communities around them.

Global Anglicans are serving as lighthouses of faith, shining the light of the Gospel by stewarding their talents and giving their time in the service of the church. It's amazing to see the impact our Global Anglican Church is having firsthand.

Being on mission also means being proactive here at home as well. There are many lessons that we can learn from our global Anglican partners around the world on how best to care for and love our neighbor right here in our own community. The refugee, the widow, the orphaned, the single parent, the shut-in, the sick, the unemployed, the underemployed, the college student starting life away from home. If we are open to the leading and prompting of the Holy Spirit, if we ask him to open our eyes to see those around us, and if we are willing to ask the Lord who He would have us minister to today - what a difference it would make in our community. Indeed - we are blessed to be a blessing to those around us. But the Christian life is a life of intentional community and corporate fellowship. So yes, ask the Holy Spirit to open your eyes individually, but also ask him to open the eyes of your family, your small group, and our local church so that together, we can all be the hands and feet of Jesus and serve and love those who are in our midst and around us all the time, if only we are willing to see them.

Global Anglicans are a people of praise, a people on mission, and a people who stand firm.

Leading the Anglican Office for Government and International Affairs office, I'm often asked what direction Anglicans lean. Biblically faithful Anglicans don't lean left or lean right; we stand firm. We stand firm on the Word of God and the authority of scripture. We stand firm on the promises and goodness of God. We stand firm in the faith once received from the Apostles.

We stand firmly assured of Christ's love and mercy and his grace and forgiveness. We stand firm in the face of adversity and assaults against the faith. Despite the many challenges facing Christians worldwide, we stand firm for the faith. In Nigeria, in the face of continual attacks by Muslim terrorists. In Myanmar, churches are being burned. In Pakistan, as our fellow believers suffer martyrdom and assaults, the church stands firm.

Thankfully, at home, we don't have to flee military juntas, civil war, or radical terrorists. However, when anti-faith agendas repeatedly attack the church, seeking to erode the faith, limit the free expression of religion, or violate our constitutional rights, the church stands firm.

Standing firm means being bold in the face of adversity. It means standing for biblical truth, even when it's unpopular. In the age of diversity, equality, and inclusion training in schools and companies, more and more Christians are singled out and targeted as the victims of systematic, institutionalized discrimination that seems to divide, exclude, and sow intolerance against people of faith.

As Christians, we should all seek to be people of praise, people on mission, people who stand firm, and finally, as global Anglicans, we must be people of Prayer.

Anglicans are a prayer book people. Living by the rule of life, we are people committed to the reading of scripture, the preaching of the word, the proper celebration of the sacraments, and persistent prayer. Through the book of common prayer, we find order and structure needed for and continually maturing para life through tremendous resources such as the daily office; we can create margin in our days to worship the Lord through prayer with great intentionality.

When are Anglican leaders gather together in conferences and synods, a highlight for me when I have had the opportunity to attend such gatherings has always the times of prayer.

So, as we reflect on what it means to be a global Anglican, let me extend to you the invitation to be a part of this global family that God has netted together worldwide. May this church be one that fosters international Anglican spirit And maybe be a People of praise, a People on mission, people who stand firm in the faith, and may we be a people committed to Prayer.

Many people often think of prayer as simply asking something from God, and it's certainly OK to do that, but God wants us to listen to him as well. And he also wants to hear your praises and your thanksgivings. I am so thankful to the Lord for our global church, I'm so grateful to the Lord for the province and diocese or jurisdiction we call home, and I'm so extraordinarily thankful for this parish and for each and everyone of our parishioners. I encourage you to join with me and The Prayer of Thanksgiving found in our book of common prayer, in the occasional Prayer's number 117:

Accept, O Lord, our thanks and praise for all that you have done for us. We thank you for the splendor of the whole creation, for the beauty of this world, for the wonder of life, and for the mystery of love. We thank you for the blessing of family and friends, and for the loving care which surrounds us on every side. We thank you for setting us at tasks that demand our best efforts, and for leading us to accomplishments that satisfy and delight us. We thank you also for those disappointments and failures that lead us to acknowledge our dependence on you alone. Above all, we thank you for your Son Jesus Christ; for the truth of his Word and the example of his life; for his steadfast obedience, by which he overcame temptation; for his dying, through which he conquered death; and for his rising to life again, in which we are raised to the life of your kingdom. Grant us the gift of your Spirit, that we may know Christ and make him known; and through him, at all times and in all places, may give thanks to you in all things. May our lives echo the Psalmist's words, and may we all Praise the Lord For great is his steadfast love toward us, and the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever.

Praise the Lord! Amen.