

Episcopal Church elects Michael Curry first black presiding bishop

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Episcopal bishops elected Michael Curry as the first African-American presiding bishop of the 2.5-million-member Episcopal Church.

Curry won in a landslide vote against three other candidates June 27 at the Episcopal General Convention, which is held every three years.

Curry, who has served as bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of North Carolina since 2000, said he wants to focus on acts of service, along with a “churchwide spiritual revival.”

While he must tend to day-to-day functions as chief executive officer, Curry said his job is more than that.

“The primary role of the presiding bishop must be CEO in another sense: Chief Evangelism Officer, to encourage, inspire, and support us all to claim the calling of the Jesus movement,” he said.

A Chicago native, Curry, 62, spent 12 years as rector of St. James Church in Baltimore. He will succeed presiding bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori, who completes her nine-year term November 1.

Curry was among the first group of bishops to allow same-sex marriages to be performed in the diocese he led. He has also participated in Moral Mondays demonstrations in Raleigh, North Carolina.

But he may be best known for his energetic preaching style with an emphasis on what he calls “radical hospitality” as well as God’s grace and love.

“He talks about being called to be relationship with God that’s not just about your own personal piety, but about changing people’s lives and changing the world for the good,” said Jim Melnyk, president of the North Carolina Diocese’s standing

committee and rector at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Smithfield, North Carolina.
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