

## Diaconal Presence at the Episcopal Youth Event '14

*By Deacon Maureen-Elizabeth Hagen*

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The Episcopal Youth Event – a triennial gathering of teenagers from all over The Episcopal Church for several days of worship, workshops, mission, and community – is a profound experience for all who participate. For youth, it is an opportunity to leave their parochial settings and discover a much larger church, a church that values them greatly. For adults, the energy and optimism renew our hope.

For three days before EYE'14, about 60 youth attended the New Community Gathering. Put together by Sarah Eagle Heart and others from The Missionary Society, about 60 Black, Latino, Asian, and Indigenous youth came together. Reflecting the growing multicultural diversity of TEC, these teens provide evidence that our future leaders will come from increasingly diverse backgrounds. I felt privileged to be with my three Latina girls and see them blossom.



On the third day, the numbers swelled to about 1,100 when teens from most dioceses arrived. We worshiped, ate, talked, learned, and laughed together. Deacon Sue von Rautenkranz (Washington) and I (Oregon) served at the opening Eucharist which, like all events at EYE, was youth-led. As the Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori, Preacher Stephanie Spellers, about 60 bishops, and the rest of the party entered the worship space, we were greeted by charged-up youth. They participated fully and with great enthusiasm. The adults fed off the youth's energy. As Sue prepared to proclaim the Gospel, the youth turned on the flashlight apps on their cell phones and waved them. Many of us on the dais joined them. Stephanie's sermon was incredible, as were all the sermons and talks that week. The presentations by The Rev. Becca Stevens about ThistleFarms and Bishop Michael Curry's sermon on mission really stood out.



On the second full day we took a pilgrimage around Philadelphia. With 21 buses, we had different itineraries, but everyone spent some time in Independence Square, visited Episcopal Service Corps, and went to various services, famous for their historic contributions. Deacon von Rautenkranz wrote, *“Probably one of the highlights of this EYE experience for me was standing at the crossing at the Church of the Advocate just weeks before the 40th anniversary of the ordination of women to the priesthood. The women gathered here were either ordained or currently seminarians. I was the only deacon - but was profoundly moved by standing in this church knowing that the history of that event affected my life and ministry. I was raised in a diocese that did not ordain women to any order until the early 90's. The action taken on that day was a sign of hope for me when I was just beginning my journey into ordained ministry. I am grateful for the women and bishops who bravely stood in this same place and made my ministry possible.”*

For me, the highlight was the visit to St. James the Less where a church has been transformed into a charter school addressing the profound needs of the community. Watching my four youth learn that they are linked to this amazing ministry through TEC was powerful. For many of the teens on my bus, the highlight was visiting St. Mark's where they witnessed a very high Catholic service. At the end of that day, we celebrated at the top of the stairs in the Philadelphia Art Museum – cheese steaks and other local specialties. And lots of dancing – always dancing.

I met other deacons at EYE'14 – H. Mark Smith (Massachusetts) and Kenneth Rackley (Nevada) who also led youth delegations. Deacons Phil Geliebter, Jay Walton, and Marj Oughton of Pennsylvania provided invaluable ground support.

As we danced in the aisles after the final Eucharist, I felt extremely blessed to have participated in all of these events. I encourage everyone to consider attending EYE'17.

