

There once was a girl. A young girl who came to church one Sunday morning with her cousin, simply to attend a service led by a female Priest. She had never met one in person before. There once was a girl, in a southern part of the United States, in 2016.

In a similar place and time: there once was a teenage girl, who dated a boy whose father was a local pastor. In his church, women were not allowed to serve in any capacity during worship — no reading, no preaching, no teaching. Throughout the time they dated, they attended his church, as he refused to attend a service led by a female Priest, even on the day that said teenage girl preached a beautiful, grace-filled, and Spirit-directed sermon.

Rewinding the clock a little: There once was a group of women, who discerned in their hearts a call from God to serve in ordained ministry. Known as the Philadelphia Eleven, they were the first women “irregularly” ordained as Priests to the Episcopal Church on July 29, 1974 in Philadelphia.

There once was an African American woman named Barbara Harris, who, during the 1960s, provided assistance to other African Americans with voter registration in Mississippi and participated in the Selma March led by Martin Luther King, Jr. for equal voting rights. After the ordination of the Philadelphia Eleven, Barbara Harris also discerned a call to the Priesthood and was ordained a Priest in the Episcopal Church in October 1980. On February 11, 1989, despite an objection by the Archbishop of Canterbury at the time, The Right Reverend Barbara Clementine Harris was consecrated Bishop in the Episcopal Church. She was the first female Bishop in the United States, and in the entire, worldwide Anglican Communion.

There was once a different female bishop in the Episcopal Church, who was one of many bishops that voted to confirm the election of the Rev. V. Gene Robertson, the first openly gay bishop in the Anglican Communion. In June 2006, The Right Reverend Katharine Jefferts-Schiori was elected as the first female Presiding Bishop (or primate) in the Episcopal Church, and in the 400 year old world-wide Anglican Communion.

On October 3, 2025, Sarah Mullally was elected as the first female Archbishop of Canterbury — the first female to serve in this role in the 1400+ year history of the Church of England. When her election is confirmed in January 2026, The Right Reverend and Right Honorable Dame Sarah Mullally, will be known as the senior primate, the first among equals, in the Anglican Communion around the world.

There once was a girl...

On this past Thursday, October 16, 2025, the Global Anglican Future Conference, otherwise known as GAFCON, a group of conservative Anglican provinces and breakaway groups issued a statement rejecting the authority of the Archbishop of Canterbury, and among other things said: they “shall not participate in meetings called by the Archbishop of Canterbury, including the

ACC, and shall not make any monetary contribution to the ACC, nor receive any monetary contribution from the ACC or its networks.”

Now, I’m not here to criticize my Anglican brothers, yet I wonder about their decision. For centuries, a core belief held by Anglicans around the world is that we come together at the same table, even when we disagree. We come together for discernment, worship, and prayer in the spirit of Scripture, Tradition, and Reason. These are hallmarks of our Anglican faith. We come together as many members of one body, actively seeking to serve God and each other throughout the world.

And, yet, there once was a girl, a woman, a widow...who stirred up some trouble.

I should clarify, of course, that I don’t mean to imply that you don’t matter unless you are a girl. Surely that isn’t the case at all. Make no mistake, however, Jesus cared about the least of us, the ones who were overlooked, cast out, set aside, oppressed and disenfranchised. And, Jesus’ teachings instruct us to do the same. As we heard this morning in our Gospel lesson this morning, it is a disenfranchised widow who seeks justice.

My friends, in ancient days, it would have been inappropriate or improper for a widow to bring her case before the courts without a man to speak for her. And, yet, this is exactly what this widow does in Jesus’ parable. And, not only does she bring the case to the courts, but she does it again and again and again. She is relentless, unceasing. She is the annoyance that the unjust judge does not want to deal with. Jesus is clear, this judge does not fear God or have respect for anyone. The only reason he grants justice to this woman is to get her to leave him alone!

This parable reminds us that the world is often unfair. Justice eludes some of the most deserving recipients. Not because their prayers to God go unanswered, but because the world (and humanity) often lets us down, particularly when it involves people who are not of God, or who do not fear God, or those who hold themselves in such high regard that they have forgotten the omnipotent nature of God. The world can bring disappointment and rejection to the best of us.

In today's parable, Jesus reminds us that in these moments when we find ourselves disappointed, disheartened, or deprived of justice we can do one very important thing — pray unceasingly and do not lose heart. Because, it is God who will save us. It is in God’s time, that justice will be granted. In God’s economy, whenever we make mistakes and get it wrong, God will see that goodness and justice are restored — even if it takes more than 2000 years, 1400 years, or 400 years.

And, so today, we can choose to give thanks that God has given us the perseverance, the determination, the passion, and the courage, the voices, the insistence, to press on, in spite of the challenges we face, or the people who attempt to silence us. Like the oppressed widow, and all who came before us, we carry on until we are heard and love and justice — God’s love and justice — prevails. Amen.