

Courtesy Resolution #1

Honoring the Life and Legacy of the Right Reverend Thomas Clark Ely, 10th Bishop of Vermont

RESOLVED, That this 193rd Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Vermont give thanks for the rich life and legacy of the Right Reverend Thomas Clark Ely, the Tenth Bishop of Vermont, who served as our bishop for 18 years and whose episcopacy touched so many aspects of our common life together—justice seeking, full inclusion, care of creation, peace-making and expansion of the ministry of all the baptized; and be it further

RESOLVED, That this Convention send its heartfelt condolences to Ann Ely and Tom's extended family; may they all know of our continued love and our fondest memories of Bishop Tom and Ann, as well as our hope that we might carry out in our lives so much of his purpose as we can.

EXPLANATION

Thomas (Tom) Clark Ely (December 14, 1951-August 30, 2025), a priest in the Diocese of Connecticut, was elected the Tenth Bishop of Vermont in September 2000 and consecrated bishop at Norwich University, Northfield, on April 28, 2001. He then served as our bishop until September 28, 2019, when he handed the crozier to our current bishop, the Rt. Rev. Shannon MacVean-Brown. During those 18 years as Bishop of Vermont, Tom guided this diocese in so many ways.

Doubtless the most lasting effect of Tom's episcopacy lies in his embrace of the ministry of all the baptized. He advocated for the baptized to participate in the worship and governance of the church at all levels and worked against clericalism in our midst. During his time in Vermont, several congregations had Ministry Support Teams, where a group of people carried out the worship, preaching, teaching and outreach ministry of the congregation instead of a lone priest doing it all. The promises of baptism and the ministry of all God's people informed all that he taught, preached and supported.

Tom was a fierce advocate for full equality for all. He was particularly supportive of the LGBTQI+ members of this Church and spoke out on their behalf at the state-wide and church-wide levels. He participated in many justice-seeking organizations: Fundación Cristosal (the most important human rights organization in Central America today but, in its first decade, dedicated to partnership with the Anglican Episcopal Church of El Salvador). He was a member of Bishops United Against Gun Violence. He was a leader in Swords to Plowshares Vermont, through which he promoted peace, reconciliation, and the transformation of violence into hope. As a co-founder of the Vermont chapter of Kids4Peace, Tom worked with youth from the United States, Palestine and Israel, dedicated to ending the conflict in the Middle East. In all these ministries, he addressed the pressing issues of social justice with courage and conviction, grounded in his belief in the God-given dignity of every human being.

Tom was a strong proponent of renewable energy and, through his vision, the diocese installed the largest solar array in Burlington almost twenty years ago. At the time of his retirement, the Trustees named it after him and Ann.

And who can forget the Alleluia Fund annual golf tournament, where he could spend time on the links or his participation in the Cranmer Cup, an international golf tournament of Episcopal clergy? His love of theatre would pop through on occasion, memorably in a Bishop's Address at one diocesan convention, when he "woke up" from a winter's nap to find new ways of our diocese being the People of God in Vermont.

As we remember and celebrate Tom's rich legacy, may we most of all recall his abiding hope—hope in God, hope in people, and hope in the power of love to transform the world. He lived in constant hope and his life was a radiant testament to love in action. May we continue forward in that same hope... and may we also sing in his spirit his favorite song, "This little light of mine...."