

Bishop's Address

Episcopal Diocese of Texas

163rd Diocesan Council

College Station, Texas, February 11, 2012

The Rt. Rev. C. Andrew Doyle, D.D.

Let me begin by giving thanks for the presence of our bishops: Bishops Payne, Benitez, and High. I am grateful for their leadership and support. I am also grateful for the partnership in this ministry and the friendship that I have with Bishop Harrison. It remains a privilege and joy to do this work with you.

Let me also say thank you to JoAnne, with whom I share my life. She is a constant support and cheerleader. We have a lovely life together and I give thanks to God daily for her love.

I take as my text Isaiah 55.11: "...My word that goes forth from my mouth: it will not return to me empty. But it will accomplish that for which I have purposed and prosper in that for which I sent it."

The living word of God in Christ Jesus has been present with us and our long history as the Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Texas. The living word of God is working its purposes out and it does not return to God empty. I believe that the living Word was present with the Episcopal laity who moved to the Mexican territory and brought with them a longing for the Episcopal Church. I believe that the living Word was present in 1831 when the Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church and General Convention appointed The Rev. Richard S. Salmon to formally nurture the Church in Texas. The Word was present as he gathered other Episcopalians who made the difficult journey to Louisiana and then to the emerging Republic of Texas.

The living Word was present when Salmon served as chaplain to the first senate in the new republic and as he offered last words at the burial service for Stephen F. Austin. The Word was present as congregations began to grow; as Christ Church, Matagorda, was formed in 1837 ... And as the General Convention and the Missionary Society sent more missionaries in 1838.

Fearful of epidemics, and challenged by travel through mud and muck, the first council met on February 1, 1839, and organized into a diocese of the Protestant Episcopal Church. Led by missionary leaders who we remember today: Gillet, Ives, Eaton, Price and Young (Price and Young were later elected bishops in the Episcopal Church); and, the laity Davenport, Perkins, Johnson, and Sartwell. Together they represented people in Matagorda, Galveston, Houston, Brazoria, Washington County and San Augustine and Nacogdoches.

The Word was present as they wrote in the first hours of the fledgling diocese: we are united, we are formed, we are styled and we are known as the Episcopal Church. The Word was present in and with our first bishops. Bishop George Washington Freeman, who, with funds from the Episcopal Church in the East and in the Church of England, bought property, paid missionaries and built churches.

The Word was present as Bishop Alexander Gregg served through the Civil War and though there was bitter division in the state and country, he challenged us to the work of mission and reconciliation, saying: "The middle way, whether in opinion or practice, the surest and safest, is most difficult to be pursued. The work of the ministry, varied in its requirements and weighty in responsibility, brings no exemption from that tendency to excess in almost every particular, to which our nature, in its weakness, is so unhappily prone! Well regulated in its efforts, however,

and sincerely intent upon [the] legitimate work [of the mission of God] – what may not the ministry of reconciliation achieve?¹

Words that today remain part of our mission and vision statements.

The Word was present with Bishop George Herbert Kinsolving, Texas George, who was known for his missionary spirit and zeal. He did not let the diocese divide during the high church/low church battles of his day. Instead he was known, while himself a well-read evangelical and low churchman, as a friend to all. He challenged us to build up the kingdom of God, and not the kingdom of men. The Lordship of Jesus Christ, the power of the Holy Spirit, personality, and focus built a strong stone foundation for a healthy anchor for the Episcopal Church in the South.

The living Word was present during the time of Bishop Clinton S. Quin who was known as “The Bishop” and who was missionary focused and driven. He believed that the Episcopal Church should be at the center of the community’s needs. “We should be at work for the good in all men’s lives.”

The Word was present in our diocese during the time of Bishop John E. Hines who challenged us to see that our legacy was one that promised the Good News for all people. He believed our mission was the kingdom of God for all people; and ALL meant ALL.

Under Hines the many missionary outposts of Quin’s era would have buildings. Never before would the Diocese see such numbers in terms of confirmations and new membership. Under his leadership he would start more congregations than any other bishop before him.

The living Word was present in the time of Bishop Milton Richardson who was known as a great preacher, administrator and missionary. It was he who rebuilt the financial missionary dollars of the diocese and focused our attention, like George Washington Freeman, on our missionary imperative to be self-sufficient and healthy.

Together we raised up clergy with a missionary spirit. We funded the buildings and notes from Hines’ era. We prepared again for future growth. We would do all this tremendous work under his steadfast leadership, which guided us through an era where we were divided over wars in Korea and Vietnam, where we were divided over segregation and civil rights, and when we began to ordain women and use a new prayer book.

In his final address to Diocesan Council, Bishop Richardson said,

“Courage has been defined as ‘a quality of mind which means danger or opposition with intrepidity, calmness, and firmness.’ But a more adequate definition of courage must strike a deeper note...It is not from the mind but from the heart that courage comes. Let a person’s heart be filled by some sovereign emotion, let him be possessed by a blazing loyalty to some exalted cause, and what might have been a barrier of his timidity is consumed like so much paper before the fire of his intense commitment. It was this way with John the Baptist. It has been this way with Christian after Christian down through the centuries. It ought to be this way with you and with me as we face the future.”²

The living Word was present.

The living Word was present with Bishop Benitez as he forged ahead into new areas of church planting, funding for mission and built up the health of the organization and its churches, and brought a sense of liturgical and spiritual renewal to our diocese.

¹ Gregg, Alexander. Primary charge to the Clergy of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Texas : delivered in Christ Church, Houston, on Saturday, May 9th, 1863, Book, 1863; digital images, (<http://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth39138> : accessed February 07, 2012), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, <http://texashistory.unt.edu>; crediting Austin History Center, Austin Public Library, Austin, Texas. P.34.

² Bishop Richardson’s Last Address, 1980, 131st Diocesan Council.

Bishop Benitez said in his final address to Council:

“We can elaborate and explicate on the meaning of being a disciple, but to me, we who are disciples of our Lord are seeking to share our bread with the hungry and the needy and the homeless of this world, and we are, at the same time, seeking to share the Bread of Life, salvation in Christ Jesus, Eternal Life, with every person that we can in the time that we have on this earth! It’s not either/or, but both/and!”³

The living Word was present during the tenure of Bishop Payne who refocused our attention on mission rather than on what divides us. He would not let us hide from the reality of a church that once renewed, once expanding, once thriving, was no longer doing so and had begun to decline. We were challenged to remember and to believe in our mission and to expect great things from one another. We were challenged to have “miraculous expectation.” His last words to us as a council were: The glorious legacy which is yours and ours – ours to have, ours to share and ours to use and to celebrate.”⁴

The living Word was present during the tumultuous time of Bishop Wimberly’s tenure. Not unlike Richardson; we paid off debt, insured funding and health for new start congregations. He made way for thinking about new initiatives and encouraged young and innovative thinking. He did this in the midst of great division. At a time when we were more likely to walk apart than together Bishop Wimberly challenged us to, “do not embrace anything less than the vision of working side by side, hand in hand as agents of hope.”⁵

We do not remember these men and their times in order to say they had it right. Each one had their flaws and their successes; as do I. Each had parishes that were happy with them and those that were not; as do I. We do rehearse this story because it is important to see that regardless of our own sin and brokenness, our own division and strife, we have sought earnestly through these years to proclaim the gospel of God in Christ to the people of Texas. And, despite our shortcomings, and by the Grace of God alone, we have been faithful to God’s mission in this place.

And it is not only to the faith of these men we turn but as JoAnne and I know, it is the faith of the thousands of clergy and the thousands of lay people, the saints of God, upon whose shoulders we stand. And whose support each bishop has depended.

With faith we look back, at a living Word, and we see that no matter what the issue de jour was, regardless of our human desire to sin and seek our own wants over and against unity for the sake of God’s mission, we in the Diocese of Texas have been upheld in our faith and we have remained united, formed, styled and known as the Episcopal Church. We stand here and we testify that the living Word of God has been present in our diocese. It has come from God, it has gone out, and it has not returned to God empty but has accomplished that which God intended.

Today you and I are called by God, to God’s mission of proclaiming the Good News of Salvation and to make our unique witness to God in Christ Jesus through the Episcopal Church. Our organization exists for nothing else. You and I are called to carry the missionary banner of God through the witness of the Episcopal Church in our day and in our context. And we are not, and we will not shrink from this task. Come what may, cost what it will.

The days of gathering at councils and telling the rest of the world how things should be are over. Today you and I stand as a missionary diocese with our hands at the plow of the sower’s field. We are working hand in hand with our neighbors and with our friends to bring in the harvest, which Jesus says is plentiful if we will but be faithful.

We do not do this because of numbers; though this year we once again had more confirmations than the last, and the Diocese of Texas grew in membership and average Sunday attendance for the first time in five years, and the second time in the last decade.

³ Bishop Beitez, Last Address, 145th Council of the Diocese of Texas, 1994.

⁴ Bishop Payne, Last Address, 154th Council of the Diocese of Texas, 2003.

⁵ Bishop Wimberly, Last Address, 160th Council of the Diocese of Texas.

We do this because we are compelled as sinners who receive a full measure of God's grace to be about God's business of proclaiming God's living Word and to do the work of the evangelist – in word and deed.

In my view our work is clear. You and I (through prayer and meditation) are to bring our own lives alongside the scriptures and recognize humbly that we are sinners in need of redeeming. We are to live our lives out of the belief that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life and to shape our lives based upon the Incarnation of God and his presence with us. Our mission will always be handicapped by our lack of living in relationship with God in Christ Jesus.

We must live our lives under the grace of God who died for our sins. And, with trembling humility seek to serve him in gratitude for his mercy. Our work as missionaries is a response to God's grace and not in order to gain it. We must faithfully live in the power of the Holy Spirit who makes us the caretakers and the missionaries in our local context. We must, as countless generations before us have done, stand up and be counted for the success and failure of our mission. We are the standard carriers today. And, Jesus calls us to pick up our cross and follow him along the way.

I love Jesus Christ, in humble service I stand, because of the Grace of God through the mighty power of his cross, to make my witness through God's Holy Spirit. And, I do so in the Episcopal Church, which I love and will make my unique witness until my dying day.

Only out of a profound sense of faith, and understanding, that we are God's missionaries may we hope to offer anyone anything of value. Only by making our witness can we be about the work of generous evangelism. We can generously invite, generously love, generously listen, generously value, generously welcome, and generously bring into the family of God, his lost sheep.

We are to be at work, like the good shepherds, seeking those who have lost their faith in the church and have wandered away yet still love Jesus. And, we are to seek those who are searching, and those who have yet to have someone offer them a glimpse of a church that cares. We are to be formed as Episcopalians and to be about the business of forming and making more Episcopalians who love Jesus. We are to make disciples for God in Christ Jesus, and specifically we are to help them live out a life that makes a unique witness to the faith inherited by our church.

This is the living Word in our midst. This is the Living God in our midst. And if we focus on this work and you as individual clergy and laity, and I as your bishop, am faithful to this – then God's word, in our time, will have accomplished that for which he sent it, and it will not return to him empty.

General Convention

Now I want to make a shift in our conversation and I want to speak to you about a few things of importance in our common life. This year we will send our deputation to General Convention. General Convention is normally a source of some anxiety for people. I am not anxious. I am not fearful. I am not concerned. And, the reason is that for me my faith in Jesus Christ, and my belief in the unique witness of the Episcopal Church to offer Good News is not dependent upon General Convention. It just isn't.

Things will happen there and we will have to deal with what happens there; that is true. I took an oath as bishop and as priest to take my place in the councils of the church and I will do so and I will do so faithfully.

Let me be clear: General Convention will do some things that some of you will like, and General Convention will do some things that some of you will not like.

Let me remind you that your faith in Jesus Christ and your love for this Church and your belief in its worship and witness to Jesus are not going to be changed by an act of General Convention. At General Convention they will pass

a liturgy for same sex blessings. They are going to pass it. I will vote against this liturgy. Your deputation will more than likely be divided on the question and in so doing cast a vote against it as well.

We have a task force focused on unity and mission. We are working on a strategy to lead through this decision. Our aim is not to stop General Convention; such an exercise would be one of frustration. We are working instead on how we will, in Texas, lead rather than react. And, I am finishing up my paper on marriage, which will be out this spring. Our plan is to publish the task force's work before General Convention in order to give the diocese time to prepare.

On another topic, the Anglican Covenant will come before General Convention for ratification. I will vote in favor of the Covenant. Your deputation will probably be divided. And, Convention will probably not support it. I am working in advance with other bishops to propose a way through our division on the Anglican Covenant.

That being said, I will continue in my leadership at the Communion level building and strengthening ties with global provinces and dioceses. I will continue to support The Archbishop of Canterbury and our friend Bishop James Tengatenga, who is the head of the Anglican Consultative Council. I will also continue to have healthy relationships with my fellow bishops in the House of Bishops and with our presiding bishop The Most Rev. Katharine Jefferts Schorri.

There will be other things up for debate at General Convention. I believe the biggest debate will be about the structure of the church; specifically General Convention and the Church Center. It is my opinion that the structure of the Church must change, and that as a body we must stop spending millions of dollars telling others how to be church, and instead put that money towards acting as church in the world in a missionary and impactful way. I don't think that is a unique stance and I am not alone in my firm belief that now is a time for reform. How that reform takes place is yet to be decided.

We in Texas continue to work well with our brothers and sisters in the wider church. Where there is work on mission and outreach the Diocese of Texas and our leadership are working hand in hand to change the world with brothers and sisters from across the Episcopal church and the Communion. We are bearing much fruit together.

Activities such as Nets for Life, where we have raised some 10,000 nets towards our 27,000 goal show an interest to think differently about changing the world in which we live.

A great example of the countless outreach initiatives being undertaken in our diocese is the outreach of one parish, St Luke's on Lake, who made eight trips to Alabama and Mississippi after the devastating tornadoes. Or the people who traveled with Archdeacon Russ Oechsel to do relief work all over the country.

Another congregation doing great work is Calvary, Bastrop, where people are building Faith Village (that you will hear more about this morning). This is a faith community gathered to help people rebuild their homes and lives.

We are involved in more than 22 different national and international partnerships for mission. Listen to the countries that parishes in the Diocese of Texas are working with: Honduras, Malawi, Belize, Guatemala, Bolivia, Navajo Nation – Arizona, Haiti, Sri Lanka, Dominican Republic, Nebraska, Tanzania, Kenya, Mexico, Russia, Nepal, Uganda, Dallas, Mississippi, Iowa, Laos, Nigeria, Lakota reservation – North Dakota.

Our work is building a healthy relationship with our church, The Episcopal Church and our global Communion.

An icon of the health is the increased dollars being sent through our missionary asking to the Episcopal Church; and our global dollars, which are also increasing for this work. Another icon of the health of this relationship is that I have been asked to join the Compass Rose Board.

Furthermore, The Diocese of Texas has been asked by the Joint Standing Committee on Planning & Arrangements if we are willing to host the 79th General Convention of The Episcopal Church (2018) in Austin, Texas. It will be one of five cities to be considered: Atlanta, Austin, Charlotte, Kansas City and Knoxville. I asked the Executive Board

to consider this and they unanimously consented to hosting if asked. We believe this will be a great time for the rest of the Church to see the good work that we are doing in Texas. We will have to wait and see if our offer is selected.

Now, I know you. I know your congregations. I know who you are and I know your stories. And, I suspect that while I am not anxious about General Convention, some of you are. And, so I want to say two things to you: first, as my Canon for Formation often reminds me, the most common command in the Bible is: “Do not be afraid.” The words “do not be afraid” are abundant in Scripture because fear is the number one reason that we as humans fail to trust God. Behind every act of disobedience and every failure to trust God -- fear is always lurking.

The problem is that for most of us, fear arrives as an unwelcome guest. Fear can easily become paralyzing instead of motivating, habitual instead of sporadic. The reality is that people who constantly worry have a hard time trusting God. And for this reason, God’s most frequent command is “do not be afraid.”

Today we can all be reminded that God really is big enough to take care of us. Today we can all be reminded that we really are safe in God’s hands. Today we can all be reminded that God has acted through the person of Jesus to restore all things to Himself, and that because of God’s initiative we do not need to fend for ourselves. Finally, in light of these truths, we can all be reminded of our God’s most frequent command to His children: Do not be afraid.⁶

Secondly, I want to challenge you to be leaders of this diocese. As we look at the General Convention and the division that may arise, I want you to be challenged to respond by saying, “No, we will not be divided.” We will stand united in our common mission and ministry.

We stand united on the grace of God and the love of Jesus Christ. And, as leaders, you and I in this room, must say to the people of our congregation: “NO. We stand as one in the Diocese of Texas.” There is no Jew or Greek, no slave nor free, no liberal nor conservative in the church of Texas. NO, in the church in Texas we are united as brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ. We will not rise up against one another, Christ’s mission will not fail on our watch, we are one and we shall overcome, and we shall overcome together. We will not have second class citizens, we will not divide up along party lines, and we will not allow our proclamation of Jesus Christ to be sidelined or to suffer. We will say there is nothing in this church that will separate us, our people, or the people outside our doors from the love of God. No powers, no principalities, nothing in this world and nothing at General Convention that will separate us.

Sharing Our Faith/Family Reunion Music Festival

As an icon of our faith and unity we share, we have the opportunity to know one another on a deeper level and to play together. First, let me invite you to join with me by participating in the Sharing Our Faith Dinners. What is this?

The dinners are designed for Episcopalians to gather together over a simple meal, get to know each other, and share faith stories based on questions provided on a set of question cards with a moderated process. I think it will be a great testimony to our unity if on April 26 people across the diocese joined together and met for dinner and participated in sharing faith with one another. There are all kinds of ways you can do this and I am hopeful that every congregation will get involved.

You can host a gathering at a pub, in a home, at a Dairy Queen, or at your church. You can feed people pizza or Chick Fil A if you want. The whole idea is to do something across parish boundaries and throughout our cities prior to General Convention that, on the one hand, reminds us of our unity; but more importantly reminds us of our unity in Christ.

⁶ Previous two paragraphs are from Canon John Newton’s Sermon Sermon, Epiphany 5, Year B, on Isaiah 40: 21-31. entitled, “do not be afraid.”

The Apostle Paul in his letters was constantly offering grace and peace to the people of his congregations. He was always reminding them to see one another “in Christ.” Greet Prisca and Aquilla, Andronicus and Junia, “in Christ”.⁷

The Sharing Our Faith Dinners give us an opportunity to greet one another and to see each other as God sees us, and to have an experience of each other as a follower of Christ. The process of sharing our personal faith story helps us to deepen our own faith, and hearing others’ stories of God’s presence in their lives brings us into deeper relationship with each other and gives us pause to consider our own journey.⁸

I am hoping every church will have a dinner coordinator to help interested parishioners participate. We are hoping for hosts from each congregation to offer up their homes and moderators to help with the evening. We have a real opportunity to set aside one night for each other. To say actually we do want to know one another and to know one another’s life in Christ.

You can learn more about this through our website at www.epicenter.org/sharingfaith and at our booth. I think this has the potential of being really cool! Imagine if several thousand people all over the diocese did this together. JoAnne and I will be participating and I am inviting you to participate with us.

Another opportunity to come together as the family of the diocese this spring is the Diocese of Texas Family Reunion being held at Camp Allen. Over the past decade people have wanted to have more fellowship time as a diocese. Thinking about this with the Executive Board we decided not to extend the Diocesan Council for this benefit but rather to seek another opportunity.

I began working with George Dehan and we decided that this year we would hold a Diocesan Family Reunion at Camp Allen. This is an opportunity for us, as a diocesan family, to gather at Camp Allen for fellowship and fun. We are going to host a music festival along with activities for the whole diocesan family. Singles, young adults, children, youth, parents, grandparents – music lovers and people looking for an excuse to hang out can join JoAnne and me for our first Diocesan Family Reunion and Music Festival at Camp Allen on May 18-20th.

These are two great events and I hope that we will make the most of them as we seek to remind ourselves of our life giving relationships with one another in the diocese, and our unity in Christ Jesus.

Election of bishop

Bishop Harrison and I have been doing a great deal of visitations on our own this year. Bishops High, Wimberly, Payne, and Duncan also helped to keep up with the need. However, we are suffering without a bishop for East Texas.

I am formally asking you, the 163rd Diocesan Council, to approve the election of a bishop suffragan for the eastern area of our diocese. Pending your approval:

The walkabouts will be held at Camp Allen on May 12, 2012.

The election will take place on June 2, 2012 at Christ Church Cathedral.

The candidate will then go to General Convention for approval.

And, the tentative ordination date will be October 6, 2012 in Tyler, Texas.

We have drafted a resolution for your approval that will come out of my address and it has been given to you as part of the pre-council materials. You will have also seen that we have saved and have budgeted for the election and the position.

I must also offer to you, according to the canons a job description.

⁷ The Rev. Laurens Hall, Sermon from the Rev. Howard Castleberry Celebration of New Ministry, 2012.

⁸ Larry Hall, Sermon entitled “In Christ,” preached at Celebration of New Ministry for Howard Castleberry, Christ Church, Nacogdoches, February 21, 2012.

The Diocese of Texas has set out a clear vision and specific goals. We know God calls us to build the Kingdom of God together through worship, witness and ministry, that we are One Church reconciled by Jesus Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit. In the Diocese we capitalize on our strengths and resources to become what God intends—a Church that reaches out in our communities to transform and restore. We exhibit exceptional stewardship at both the congregational and diocesan levels with an eye to excellence in everything we do.

In each of our particular settings, we are called to help network people, build healthy partnerships for mission, and support healthy networks between institutions and congregations. The bishop suffragan as a member of the diocesan family and the diocesan staff must be a person who can help form us into a people who know that this is our calling.

The person elected must also have a centered Anglican perspective that is uniquely and unabashedly Episcopalian, set an example of leadership and help us all bear out our unique witness as the Episcopal Diocese of Texas.

The bishop suffragan will work closely with me and share the work of the episcopacy in Texas. The bishop will reside in Tyler, where the diocese has a home, and offices on the All Saints' School campus. The bishop suffragan will work collaboratively with the diocesan staff to provide resources and support for congregations, especially the 50 plus located in the eastern region. The new bishop suffragan will be the vision bearer and have pastoral oversight for the congregations of this region, helping to bring greater connections with the wider diocese and wider church.

While this person will have a special connection with our diocese's eastern region, a bishop is always elected for the whole Church and the Anglican Communion. He or she will visit congregations across the diocese and will be active on a number of boards that I will assign. The new bishop will be my representative to Episcopal Church Women, the Little Church Club and Cursillo, among other groups, as well as be responsible for the pastoral care of diocesan clergy and their families. I expect to assign additional responsibilities in accordance with the unique giftedness our new bishop suffragan brings to the position.

I trust you and look forward to your discernment for the next bishop suffragan of Texas. I know you will raise up among us a gifted leader, pastor and teacher to help Bishop Harrison and I shepherd the mission of the diocese.

Conclusion

I recently read Bishop Quin's fourth year report to Council and in it he tells the people of the diocese that he truly enjoys his visitations and time with them. It has been true these many years with all the bishops and it is true for me. I look forward to being with you. Sundays and visitation days are the best days. I have been in almost all the parishes and will soon complete my task only to begin again; which I will cherish.

I believe that we are doing good work together in the Diocese of Texas. I believe we truly love one another and are ultimately bound by Christ's love for us. We are healthy. We are growing. We are having fun together. We are fearless. We are beautiful. We are faithful. We are worshipful. And, as our founders hoped, we are united, formed, styled and known as the Episcopal Church.

And, I will tell you: you are a great diocese in a great Church. And you ... You are good people. You are good people. God loves you. God's mercy shines upon you. And, I see that in my life with you. It is an honor to bear witness to the fact that God's living Word is in our midst and it is thriving in our congregations. God's word is working its purposes out in your lives as individuals and in your communities. God's word does not return to God empty but returns with the missionary blessings of the Episcopal Diocese of Texas.

It is the privilege of my life to stand before as your bishop.