

Bishop Doyle's Address to the 165th Council

Gracious Father, we pray for thy holy Catholic Church. Fill it with all truth, in all truth with all peace. Where it is corrupt, purify it; where it is in error, direct it; where in any thing it is amiss, reform it. Where it is right, strengthen it; where it is in want, provide for it; where it is divided, reunite it; for the sake of Jesus Christ thy Son our Savior. Amen

People are often confused and believe that tenacity is the same as persistence. Persistence is doing something again and again until it works. Tenacity is using new data to make new decisions to find new pathways to find new ways to achieve a goal when the old ways don't work. Tenacious means having the quality of tenacity and determination. "Tenacious D" is a basketball term used by commentators to describe robust [defensive](#) positioning in basketball. This is the very earthy Tenacious D rock band with Jack Black and Kyle Gass.

It's safe to say that Thomas Edison tried over 1,000 times and failed before he reached the happy invention of a functioning light bulb. Louis Shackleton's South Pole expedition was a tenacious effort following the wreck of their ship The Endurance. Louis and Clark's westward exploration in all its forms to find a Westward portage was tenacious. Martin Luther King working to end terror against Blacks in the south in speeches, marches, challenges, leadership, endurance, and dreams was tenacious. Winston Churchill and his battle to save Britain was tenacious. Desmond Tutu and Nelson Mandela's long journey to end apartheid and then their work in reconciliation was certainly tenacious.

Each one of these individuals shows to us an example of what it means to have a tenacious spirit. I believe that we have a tenacious God as well. We have a God who wants to be with, to dwell with, to walk with his creation and his creatures. God has, from the very beginning of time, called us to be present with Him. This God has sent prophets in sages. This God has sought to gather His people underneath His wing. God's tenacious one-way love is for us, and we are a tenacious church because we have a tenacious God.

Staying tenacious, though, is as important as being—can anybody be tenacious for just a moment? Staying tenacious requires clear goals and having a clear vision and understanding where we're going and who we are. It requires a little bit of competition to motivate us—to inspire us, but also to form and clarify our own and unique mission. It requires that we surround ourselves with tenacious people who have that same vision, who keep us going when we need reinvigoration. It requires that we be honest about our fears and the challenges before us and that we take up the banner to face them. It requires that we not be afraid to fail. And as I have said before that we should, then as a tenacious diocese, fail gloriously in our attempt to bring about the kingdom of God in our context.

We must, finally, always be aware of what we have—to be grateful and to have gratitude, because it can always be tempting and it's so easy—so easy—to drift into conversations about how hard it is and what we don't have. And this—the tenacious opportunity to use the resources that are before us.

Therefore, I submit that we are a tenacious diocese. Over the past 5 years, you have traveled with me on a road to grow and thrive in an era when churches and denominations are supposed to be shrinking. We are in our fourth year of membership growth. In a time when we are supposed to be ashamed of being Episcopalians, you have claimed it and are sharing the good news of our church. In a time when Episcopalians are not supposed to invite people to church, you're inviting people to church. In a time when we're supposed to have poor stewardship and not enough money, we continue to outperform our giving. In a time when we're supposed to give up on starting new creations because that's just not in fashion anymore, we are multiplying and increasing our efforts. In a time when the church is supposed to be an ineffective partner in serving the community and our neighbors, we are becoming stronger and more able to do this.

In a time when liberals and conservatives are not supposed to work together on anything, and especially not for a common cause, you are willing to raise the banner of God and Christ Jesus and spread the good news of His of salvation far and wide. And I'll tell you I had a young couple in my office this last week—they came to me and we're recruiting them to come to the [Diocese of Texas](#). What they said to me was: “In our time, we had lost hope that there was a diocese such as this where people are united for the sake of Jesus Christ.”

You are tenacious. Not just simply because you are a collaborative of willing people, but because you're willing to collaborate and being creative and entrepreneurial and trying different things in order to help usher in a new age of mission. And I will tell you after 5 years of serving as your bishop diocesan, I wouldn't have any other diocese or any other group of leaders and individuals to move forward with. So I want to say, thank you.

Let me thank the faithful parishes that have upped their giving despite difficult economic times, showing faith in our mission. I want to thank those of you who have dug gardens and fed homeless people, who have furnished apartments for people needing to stay in the medical center, who have comforted a friend in need, for actively living into your baptismal promise, I want to thank those of you who have visited people in the nursing homes and who have visited people who are shut in.

I want to thank the ones of you who have welcomed a visitor into our congregations warmly, who have actually scooted out of that chair which you know is yours (that pew that has your name on it), and moved to that space in the middle to leave room for that newcomer. I want to thank all of you who have actually invited somebody to church because you believe that what we have going is worth inviting somebody to.

Thank you for your creativity and your new imagination that is taking form in new ministries and new church services. I want to thank the clergy who have thought and acted creatively, who have invested their lives in those who God has given them, who have urged and prodded some of us who are less willing, who have answered the phone in the middle of the night and gone to the hospital because you needed them. We have an incredible group of clergy in this diocese, and I am grateful.

It is one thing to have vision and to be able to catch the vision; it is another thing to have leaders like you in the diocese and who serve on various boards who catch that vision of what we can be together, how we can reshape our organizations, how we can build new foundations and have given extra hours deep into the night to make things happen, to create opportunities for ministry and to give generously once they have the power and authority in those foundations to urge our congregations forward.

Life is difficult. It is trying and even hard at times for all of us. But you all have caught the vision of the kingdom of God and have been willing to serve the broader church when it is sometimes a hassle to fit it into your life. I am grateful because you are making this endeavor a priority. I cannot do this job alone, and I am grateful for your diocesan staff.

I don't know if you noticed that when we started 5 years ago, I asked my staff to see how many parishes they were in. I think they did about 35, 40 parishes. I don't know if you've noticed that they were working with more than 75 different congregations with over 200 one-on-ones with you. That is an incredible increase. They are on the road, and we never even see each other because they are out there in the field so much.

And the 2 bishops suffragan--we are blessed to have them. We could not have pulled this off without [Bishop Harrison](#) and her work and negotiations. I hope you'll stand up right now and show your appreciation. The 2 of them (Bishop Fisher) are an incredible asset to our diocesan team and our shared Episcopal ministry in this diocese. We are a tenacious diocese that against all odds, proclaims this tenacious God. Our God has a mission of reconciliation through Christ Jesus through His creation and with His creatures and to His creatures through God. In Christ Jesus, we claim boldly that we are reconciled to Christ and that we are reconciled to one another. And we believe that the Episcopal church and Diocese of Texas is the church for God's mission, and we are proud of that fact. It's okay to give a round. We're doing the work.

We are a diocese that believes in evangelism that knows who we are and moves forward based on our identity, who fosters a learning culture for leaders, who is eager to transform people lives and have our own life transformed. We are a healthy, growing church that is translating the gospel of Jesus Christ across the boundaries of culture. We are encouraging significant communication, both personally and digitally.

We are growing numerically and planting new churches. We want to be excellent in our service ministry, our revealing God's mission through service to our neighbors by transforming and

restoring and changing the world around us. We care—we care—and we want to support our communities. We want to help make them better places. We want to make them well communities. We seek excellence in the stewardship, which is not just the stewardship of our gifts financially, but the stewardship of vocations as individuals.

This last year we undertook a 360° review of the Diocese of Texas. We had over 200 individuals and leaders of the diocese who were surveyed and then the staff took a separate survey. The results indicate that the overall health of the Diocese of Texas with an average score of 7.56 out of 10. And I will tell you that is a huge moment there. There's a lot of momentum and a sense that we are accomplishing what we are setting out to do. Every area still needs work. The results tell us that what is working is our communication strategy, the offerings that we have a diocesan office to help you do work, our supportive clergy that the diocesan staff is out and among the people, and that the way in which we are beginning to envision service is making huge strides.

We have to work on—the survey said—we have to work on keeping up with communications. We have to work on better support for our people, our clergy, and laity on the ground. We have to work to get it to the congregations and be present with them. We need to continue to take the next steps in improving our outreach and service and that we have a long way to go and our inclusivity.

We are, therefore, clear about what is before us. We have a unified evangelism strategy. It's taken us about 5 years, but we believe that we're going to make progress and we'll know we're making progress when existing congregations take the initiative for planting new congregations. Today, as of right now, we have 6 congregations that have started new communities or new congregations—[St. Mark's, Houston](#); [Good Shepherd, Austin](#); [All Saints', Austin](#); [Christ Church, Tyler](#); [St. Andrew's, Pearland](#); and [St. Matthew's, Austin](#) are all taking the initiative of moving outside of their campus and trying to create new spaces as missionaries out in the world.

We have watched, as Mary said, a Bee Cave church start and have plans for multiple sites over the next 5 years. I just want to tell you a story. Paul went and [Mike Wyckoff](#) there at [St. Luke's on the Lake](#) introduced Paul to some people in Lakeway, and people in Lakeway introduced him to a co-pastor of a non-denominational church. Paul was invited to go meet with this non-denominational church. They took up a collection for Paul's new ministry and new church start. They raised \$2500, which they gave to them.

And then the senior pastor got up and said to Paul, "Paul, now you're an Episcopal priest." Paul said, "Yes." And he said to his congregation—this is the non-denominational pastor—said to his congregation, "If there are any of you who are Episcopalians or have the Episcopal church in your background or like this kind of worship, I want to encourage you to join Paul in his new church start." Now I will tell you if non-denominational churches can do that, the Diocese of Texas can do that for our other church starts as well. Incredible story.

I believe the creation of [The Great Commission Foundation](#) with over \$110 million in it will help us focus our attention on new congregations and new communities. The Great Commission Foundation will free up dollars in the [Quin Foundation](#) so that they may focus on their redevelopment and the growth of existing congregations more that way. Through the [Strategic Mission Grant](#) program it funds along with the [Episcopal Foundation of Texas](#), there are 27 grants now from the Strategic Mission Grant, which is a huge number—more than we've ever given away in the past. But here's the amazing thing—of the 27 congregations that have received Strategic Mission grants, 17 of those congregations have an attendance increase of over 10% this last year.

We need to continue to develop our invite and welcome and connect activities. We need to further develop strategies around formation and discipleship. I believe that God certainly invites us to be disciples, but as far as I read in the scriptures, God is never satisfied with disciples. He turned every one of them into an apostle and sent them out into the world to proclaim the gospel. We've been doing a lot of following and we're getting good on the discipleship stuff, but it is time now for us to get really good at being apostles of gospel of Jesus Christ in the state of Texas.

We have plans that are ready for action and new congregation starts. We have opportunity to expand our congregation in Pflugerville. We are on the eve of purchasing land for that new [St. Mary Magdalene](#). We are ready at Bridgeland and Grand Parkway on 290 and Northwest Houston. We are ready at 288 in the Beltway South. Exxon headquarters in the Spring Woodlands area. Southern Smith County in South Tyler, which is underway in a discussion. Bee Cave in Austin, underway. North I-45 and 59 Corridor, north of 610 Houston, possibly for a multicultural start. East Houston, East Austin under consideration right now by an Austin Congregation. [St. Julian of Norwich](#) is going to need a bigger space because they are growing. St. Paul's Pflugerville and San Francisco are growing.

On the horizon, Formula One area, south Austin tollway 130. Generation Park, Northeast Houston at Beltway 8. Lake Waco, South College Station, Lumberton, and we have to review the Copperas Cove area. By 2016 we plan to have accomplished over 15 new church starts and have a new plan for another 20 by 2020. Now you're all saying, "Those are pretty close to me." I am telling you there are enough people in Texas to plan more than these churches. So keep calm and plan on.

By 2020 we will have planted those churches; we will have more diversity in congregations we will have grown our Latino church footprint; we will have changed the economic equation of planting new churches, bringing the cost down. We will have diversified our types of communities. We will have more churches growing than shrinking. That is our goal.

In order to achieve that, there are some things that must come around it. And one of the goals is [Campus Mission](#). In 2008 you all said that we were concerned about the strength of our campus ministries, and that became a focus for these first 5 years. And it is a key place for evangelism.

Today we have been reorganizing and have reorganized the structure of funding for college mission. With our unity and mission budget, we will fully fund the existing programs and have room to fund a new start in 2014 on the campus of the University of Houston.

We have strong leaders who have worked to accomplish what you said was important, which is connection with parishes and communities across the diocese, even holding open houses in churches to introduce local seniors to our Episcopal Campus Mission. Having fulfilled all of our Campus Mission objectives, it's time to expand that ministry on existing campuses. So by 2020 we will see our current 16 campus missions multiply and increase across the diocese. In 2020 we will see more students involved in campus missions than we have today, and in 2020 we will have a maturing campus mission program on our community college campuses across the diocese. That is our next goal.

Five years ago you said to me, "We want to reflect the people in our missionary contacts. We want to look like the people outside of our doors. We want to be a more multicultural, intercultural, polycultural church. In many ways we already are multicultural and multiethnic and a socially layered diocese. In fact we like to say that we are intercultural already. However, we have not achieved the goals that we desire, which are to reflect the family of God outside of our walls. Our goal over the next 5 years is to continue to grow into our identity as that church.

We are currently helping congregations hire and transition as their neighborhoods change in ethnicity. We see growth at 3 of these congregations in the last year—San Pablo of Houston, San Pedro, Pasadena, and St. Timothy's Austin. Those are brave congregations who have stepped forward with a vision of becoming the church that God is making them. And they deserve a round of applause for that.

As of this year, we're actually going to track how these congregations are doing and how they're growing. But when we look at just 3 congregations from last year who are predominately Spanish speaking congregations, they had together over 27% growth—27%.

I went to one of these congregations of—some of you now know—of having open baptism where I invite people who believe they've heard the gospel of Jesus Christ and God's love for them and if they are not baptized, they can come forward for baptism. Now sometimes all I hear is crickets, but I've gotten used to just allowing that to happen because in several congregations over the last year, individuals have come forward. In fact last Sunday at St. James, Austin, we had an individual who had been worshipping with them for several weeks who came forward and was baptized. It's an amazing thing.

At San Mateo I thought I was in for a cricket moment. I offered and was questioning my Spanish. (laughter) And then this gentleman stood up and he came forward to the altar. The font was right there at the front of the altar. We're standing around it. It's kind of low where he came and he just plopped down on his knees and I said, "Do you want to be baptized?" And he said,

“But I am a sinner.” I said to him, “I am a sinner, too.” I embraced him and we baptized him. It was an amazing moment. I looked up and there was a line to the back of the church. We baptized over 30 individuals on that day.

We have to have a diversity in our leadership as well, especially in our clergy leadership. So we have over the last 10 years moved from 1%-6% and our goal is 10%. I’d like to suggest by 2020, we have 20% of our clergy who identify with a different ethnicity than white, male, English speaker.

By 2020 we will be publishing online and through our multiple communication tools, materials, resources in a diversity of languages to help with our mission efforts in this area, and that we will more closely reflect the Texas that we live in.

In our first 5 years, we focused on our vocations and vocation intention on building 3 strong commissions on ministry and have done an excellent job with that. In order to increase our evangelism efforts, though, we need to review and rethink how we raise up ministers as lay pastors, lay preachers, lay evangelists who can go out and start new congregations. It’s not just dependent upon clergy. If we do this well, we’ll be able to multiply our church and plant new communities across the diocese beyond our current capacity.

We’ll need to look at the Episcopal church canons, of course, on our own and understand how we can better enable people to be raised up for a ministry in the church. We’ve already begun that and gone a long way by raising up bi-vocational clergy, and I’d like to ask those 27 or so bi-vocational clergy to stand up right now. These people have gone out and have studied capacity of our church.

If you believe you’re called to ministry, I want to encourage you to seek one of them out and talk to them about the life-changing work that they are doing. By 2020 we will have accomplished this work. I want lay people to be planting new Episcopal churches. We will complete a review of our policies around deployment and bi-vocational clergy to enable that to be used more effectively for evangelism in mission. We will have created a strong and more diverse leadership core for the diocese which is connected in sharing across the mission field, and we will have developed internal discernment processes and resources for laity in the congregations.

Leadership is the next thing. We’re working to develop clergy leaders in a variety of clergy groups and participating with them on the ground to help you as clergy understand what your challenges are and then for us to help you find resources to meet those challenges. But we also need to work on our lay leadership, so we have begun to develop and create. We’ll have our second one via conference, which puts evangelism and stewardship and service all together under one roof where you all as laity can come together and generate assignment for the mission that is before you.

We have come a long way since 2008 in providing specialized, broad, collaborative, and local opportunities to raise up leaders. But by 2020 we're going to have to see more lay leadership pushing us forward and being formed through local convocational gatherings. In 2020 we'll see more coaching in local congregations. We'll see a diversity of clergy gathering and forming organically around areas of needed development. We will develop our online resources more fully. The [LOGOS Project](#), the video project like [TED Talks](#), which provides video programs for leadership will continue to grow in its usage. And our capacity for leaders to train and support our mission will multiply exponentially.

Five years ago Christian formation was a concern. Today we have completely rebuilt this area of our diocesan ministry with great success, revisiting Sunday morning, how to pray at home. Our youth conferences have waiting lists on them. We will need to continue to explore the new ways of engaging this way. Our goal has to be to instill in our people the story of God and Christ Jesus so that they are vessels of His grace and mercy and love and forgiveness to every person in their life, so that the people in our congregations believe that they are the vessels chosen by God to spread the gospel. In 2020 we are going to see more formation opportunities, but more on the ground and one-on-ones with people.

Service is the next area. We have evangelism and service. Five years ago we set a goal to see congregations throughout the diocese reach out each year with new ways to improve the lives of their neighbors. Over the last five years we redeveloped more than 90 homes in Galveston after the hurricane. We were present in Bastrop after the fires. We have been on the ground in West—we are now invited to help dioceses throughout The Episcopal Church after disasters.

We are leading in so many ways around our service area. Our deacons are out and leading our churches into the world and guiding people into new, diverse ministry settings. The congregations of the Diocese of Texas today have service ministries, outreach ministries numbering over 1400, from prison ministries to nursing home care, food services and health clinics. Some are feeding programs for children who normally receive their primary nutrients at school—community gardens, immigration services and ESL classes. We are helping people to gain their citizenship. We are making a difference in the world around us.

Despite our huge impact and our excellent work, I believe this area continues to suffer, in some ways because of a lack of communication and cohesion. Our goal has to be to use the sale of St. Luke's Episcopal Health System and the new [Episcopal Health Foundation](#) to motivate us and to move us out into the world. The health foundation, with its \$1 billion corpus, will help lead our churches to greater collaborative work, multiplying our dollars and our community impact. Together with the Episcopal Health Foundation, we will be able to provide a diversity of healthcare initiatives to the underserved throughout the diocese—57 counties. The corpus will provide interest revenue of \$30-\$35 million a year for this initiative.

Our mission is to advance the kingdom of God with a specific focus on health and wellness through grants, research, and initiatives to support the mission of the Episcopal Diocese of

Texas. But it's not just health or healthcare that we're after, because we have adopted a definition that says that health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being; not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. In the near future, the Episcopal diocese will be able to offer access to healthcare for many who have none. Tomorrow we'll be able to offer hope to those who may have lost theirs. We'll be able to do this because of the sale of the hospital. And in my role as bishop, we will continue to put all of the mountain-moving powers of faith and prayer and human skill, which we can bring to bear on individuals in need.

We have in place our new CEO and president, [Elena Marks](#), who we'll introduce later. We have been in the process of doing the work around investment. We will spend the rest of the year designing the way the grants will work. By the fall Elena will be visiting with the diocese in a variety of forms to talk about how we're going to begin to move that money through the foundation and into the field to work with congregations and other NGOs across the 57 counties. So you'll be hearing more about that. We will not be able to fully fund in the first year, but we'll begin to ramp up in 2015, and this is going to completely change the way that we do our service ministry.

It also is going to change the way we operate as a diocese in our foundations. We are building a new synchronicity with the foundations of the diocese so that we can multiply our investment in these dollars.

I also want to say that we must be attentive to how we gather. It is clear that in 2008 and 2009 that we need to deal with how we come together. And we made some progress on this floor of Council around being able to have conversations, to pray together, and to be one church.

But we still have opportunities to move into the future, to make headway where we can connect people in this place using the best and most up-to-date business format. For the most part we still do things like we done them for eighty or a hundred years—I mean you name it, we are doing council the same way over and over again and it is time for us to take a closer look at how we do council and how we gather. Do we want to consider a bi-annual council?

Council needs to be a piece of our gathering, so as we gather in more locally we also need to have our community when we gather reflect that diversity across the diocese.

Our communications work continues. And as our goals, we will make a comprehensive review and begin to look at ways in which we can do our communications better and multiply your communication efforts into the future.

You said in 2008 that you wanted to be an Episcopal and Anglican diocese. In 2003 we had suffered under the strain of wanting to be part of the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion. And in 2008 that concern and anxiety was cast into vision to strengthen our Anglican Communion and Episcopal Church ties. In 2008 I have to say we were still pretty

wounded as a diocese. But we took a risk and I believe that we can remain a diverse diocese together, unified in mission. And I believe that we have accomplished this.

I have continued to strengthen both our personal ties with the Archbishop of Canterbury, other in the Anglican Communion, and the Episcopal Church. Our expansion into 3 companion dioceses across the globe does this work. In 2008 we did this out of a desire to hold our church together and to navigate the culture wars. But today we have the privilege of doing it because we know we are stronger and we are better by our diverse voices that globally connect us to the worldwide Anglican Communion. We have relationships with 75 dioceses across the global communion, and we provide resources and support in mission and ministry across the Episcopal Church.

There once was a time in this church when the leaders of the Diocese of Texas were not isolated, but when they took their place in the councils of the wider church, when we sat with our brothers and sisters and worked for the common good and the mission of the Episcopal Church. That time has passed and we have become isolated. It is time for a new era ... It is time for a new era.

You will say, “Why are we giving money to the Episcopal Church in this unified budget?” I’ll tell you it’s because we don’t vote with our money. We don’t believe that this Episcopal Church belongs to any one individual, but we believe that this is God’s church and mission and God needs resources to do this work and the Diocese of Texas has resources, and we are to ante up and take our place in leadership with the rest of our brothers and sisters. It is time. You are too good a diocese—too good.

I am proud to announce that they are eager for this reconciliation and that they have chosen us to host [General Convention](#) in 2018 in Austin, Texas. The Executive Council approved it unanimously, and it’s going to be all kinds of crazy and weird in Austin, I’ll tell ya. (laughter) But we’re ready. What’s going to happen there is that we will open ourselves up to see what is happening in the wider church, and they are opening up themselves to see what incredible things you, the people of the Diocese of Texas, are doing in this place and in this context. And I am proud to be your bishop, and I am excited about 2018.

[Justin Welby](#) has made reconciliation the cornerstone of his ministry. He said the key theological concept for Christian faith is reconciliation with God and the breaking down of barriers between people. And therefore for me, I have this sense that part of the church’s role is to be reconciled reconcilers. We have made this our diocesan vision of who we are. These key words run through every part of our core values. Yes, we are still wounded and recovering from the past culture wars. And there will be others. But we are less divided today.

People ask, “How much longer must we fight? And how much longer must we wait?” Those are the cries that I hear. Our life in this diocese truly reveals an important ingredient into the success of all evangelism. Because if we are not truly reconciled to God and if we are not reconciled with one another, then offering reconciliation to other people just doesn’t work.

I believe as a diocese in the next 5 years, we have more work to do. But I believe it is within our capacity to be known globally as the church—as one church, and the Diocese of Texas that is reconciled by Jesus Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit and called by God to build the kingdom.

I want to talk to you for a moment about [Canon 43](#). I've really struggled with what to do. I was advised by some people to go down and talk in a microphone during the debate. I don't think that you hear me differently whether I'm standing here or there. And that would be exercise. So we're just going to do this.

Every year that I have been in ministry, we have debated Canon 43. Every year. Every one of my councils as a priest in this diocese and now bishop. It has been filled with anxiety and fear and frustration and anger. The problems are many. And each one of you actually has a different idea of what should happen. But I think something important is happening, and I think as your bishop I need to tell you the truth about this.

Canon 43 has become the identified patient of our diocese. An identified patient is a term used in a clinical setting to describe the person in a dysfunctional family who has been unconsciously selected to act out the family's inner conflicts as a diversion. That is what we have done with Canon 43. We have diverted the hard work of actually sitting with one another and talking to one another. We have taken that energy and we have placed it into this room. I was a young priest and we met at [Camp Allen](#) that year. I don't remember what year it was. It was a while ago. It was under Bishop Payne's tenure.

There were 2 great leaders at that meeting who modeled this idea that we should sit and talk. It actually had been gathering people, parishioners from the 2 divergent churches together and having common meals and talking with one another about how they didn't agree on sexuality. They were praying together. And those 2 people gave me a vision of what life could be like when we have great division and what we could do.

Now I have to say when they asked for support from the diocesan leadership to expand that program to begin to share what they had learned and to nurture conversations across all of the dioceses, they were told no. They were right. They were right and we were wrong.

One of the real problems is that Canon 43 on the one hand reveals the very highest virtue of fidelity in holy matrimony. But it has some baggage. When I started the [Unity in Mission](#) project, [Secretary James Baker](#) told me we have to deal with Canon 43, and I told him no. It was the only piece of advice I didn't follow.

It's time for me to lead again on this. I'm ready to do that. I'm going to need some help. But I believe that that dream of people sitting together, having a conversation, is actually what we need to do. I'm going on sabbatical so I'm just going to make my case. I'd like you not move 43 on the floor today. I've already talked to everybody about this. As part of that, I've made my

feelings clear about it. I'd like the time to spend on sabbatical and to come back after my 3 months away and to deal with this.

You trusted me with Unity in Mission, and that was a trust that I am proud to have received. It has modeled for at least 17 other dioceses a way forward and 2 provinces in the Anglican Communion. We did something that people said we couldn't do; we faced our fear and we walked in and we challenged ourselves to deal with it. I'd like us to do that again, but it takes all of us to do that. And it takes us committing to truly be as God is with us—impartial with our love in this moment and to allow me some space.

We are going to continue this conversation with the goals and everything after my sabbatical. I will be holding town hall meetings across the diocese. The staff will review all of this and begin to do our work. But we have a great deal of work yet to do. 2013 was a reset year. In our fifth year together is was a reset year—fourth consecutive year of membership growth, fifth year of consecutive stewardship growth. Unity in Mission went into effect. The health system transition was accomplished. The Great Commission Foundation with \$110 million was created; the creation of the Episcopal Health Foundation with over \$1billion; the unity budget; the underwriting of the insurance budget, which dropped our assessment from 17 to 10%.

We expanded the [Iona School](#). We expanded our Invite, Welcome, Connect project and it is being published by [Forward Movement](#). We have held our first Invitation Sunday. We have another one this September 21 this year. We are a healthy diocese of 150 congregations and 5 second sites and 16 college ministries and 5 foundations and 67 schools and 1400 service ministries. It has been an incredible 5 years, and we are together because we all did this. We set our future trajectory. We are riding on our history now.

People are going to look back at this point, and they will talk about what we did here. What did they do when all of that happened? Were they faithful? Were they faithful to the call of spreading the good news of God and Christ and reaching out. We are going to tell that story through our struggles and through our successes, and I believe they'll see that we were faithful people. I believe that they will be proud of us in this moment.

Five years ago I stood before you and I said to you and quoted from Sir Francis Drake, “Disturb us Lord when we are too well pleased with ourselves, when our dreams have come true because we dreamed too little, when we arrive safely because we sailed too close to the shore. We ask you to push back the horizons of our hopes and to push into the future in strength, courage, hope, and in love.

This is a great prayer. To take our next steps, to venture forth towards a far horizon, to be courageous no matter how afraid we are—that's what we have. It's right here. It's for each of us. The potential is huge. It's huge because we are tenacious in our faith.

I want to end by saying that this has been a particularly difficult year in my family. But you all have been incredible. You've been incredible to me, and JoAnne and I are grateful to you. I don't want to go anywhere else. I want to serve with anybody else. Our future is here with you, and I am grateful for you and I am proud to be the bishop of the Diocese of Texas. Thank you.