

The Bishop's Address
to the 113th Annual Convention
of the Diocese of Lexington
February 20, 2009

Unprecedented Hope

We gather as the people of God in the eastern half of Kentucky in the midst of the most uncertain economic environment most of us have ever experienced. That uncertainty has, as uncertainty is wont to do with human beings, produced no small amount of anxiety in us. Anxiety, even when it is based in reality, does not serve us well because it inhibits the very sort of thinking we most need at the very time we most need it. Facing reality, by itself, is not enough for us. We must overcome anxiety. We must face reality with hope.

We as a Diocese will face the reality before us by planning for contingencies. The 2009 Budget takes account of a number of possible scenarios. The Executive Council of the Diocese will closely monitor assessments. I, as Bishop, will be attentive to those congregations that may be struggling. We will neither pretend the realities are not what they are, nor will we panic. We will respond as appropriate, but we will not react, we will not despair, and we will not turn inward. We will walk from this point into whatever God brings—together and confident.

Most importantly of all, we will hope. As disturbing as our economic situation is, it also comes in a season of great hope for us. The Christian understanding of hope, though, is not that things will eventually get back to normal. The Christian hope is that

they will change for good. The Christian hope is not that things will cease to be disturbing but that things will disturb us enough to change them.

The Book of Revelation was written at a time of unprecedented difficulty for the Christian community. It was not intended to deliver Nostradamus-like predictions of the end of time, which is how it is often used, but to deliver a word of encouragement and hope to Christians in anxious times. It was written, I'm sure, because God knew that Christians, in order to live in the world, would need encouragement and hope.

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. ... And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away." And the one who was seated on the throne said, "See, I am making all things new. ... These words are trustworthy and true. ... I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life. Those who conquer will inherit these things, and I will be their God and they will be my children. But as for the cowardly, the faithless, ... and all liars, their place will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death." ¹

We must not be cowardly or faithless. We must not prefer lies to truth, including disturbing truth. To the extent that what disturbs us is unprecedented, so must our hope be unprecedented. The hope of the saints, when it is aligned with God's hope, will change the way the world is.

We have, indeed, seen unprecedented hope. Not so long ago, in a time when lynchings were not unheard of, a time when police dogs snarled at black children and fire hoses pinned black young people against the walls of downtown buildings, a time when a black person could be jailed for not giving up her seat on a city bus to a white person, a

¹ Rev. 21: 1-8.

time of three missing young men who were trying to register black voters, a time of the National Guard making a path for nine black students to enter the first day of classes in high school, a time of governors standing at the doors of state colleges proclaiming, “Segregation yesterday, segregation today, segregation forever,” we were witnesses to unprecedented hope. As surely as it was a time of darkness and danger, it was also a time when the refrain “we shall overcome” reverberated through the land. Not might overcome. Not even should overcome. But *shall* overcome. That refrain seemed ridiculous to many, but it shook the way things were to their very foundation so that the old heaven and the old earth began to pass away before our eyes, and God could be heard proclaiming, “See, I am making all things new.”

It ought to teach us something about the power of hope. It was only 45 years ago that the idea that black children might “not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character”² was but the distant dream of a Christian minister named Martin Luther King, Jr. But, when our dreams and God’s dreams, our hopes and God’s hopes, are the same, it is possible to journey within one generation’s memory from the world of segregation to a world in which one of those black children can grow up to be the President of the United States. What made that journey possible was the hope echoing in this chorus:

We shall overcome.
We shall overcome.
We shall overcome some day.
Oh, deep in my heart,
I do believe
We shall overcome some day.

² Martin Luther King, “I Have a Dream,” *American Rhetoric: Top 100 Speeches*, 28 August 1963, <<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/mlkihavedream.htm>> accessed 18 February 2009.

We have gathered here as the people of God in the eastern half of Kentucky to reflect on what all this means to us, how God is making all things new, and particularly on how God is making the Church new. One thing it must mean is that we, the Church, are going to be for the people who are hurting most, for the people who have lost their jobs, with help to find new ones; for the people who do not have enough to eat, with food; for the people who have lost their homes, with shelter; and for the people who have lost their hope, with hope. Another thing it means is that we must be a voice against the temptation to destroy the mountaintops of Eastern Kentucky in search of a quick way to satisfy our lust for fossil fuel without regard to what is left behind or what damage is done or whose labor is involved or whose safety is at risk. Yet another thing it means is that we must be a force for creating a just alternative to the economic order that is passing away with the conviction that God desires to make all things new and that sharing is a very basic Christian virtue. We must be a force that our economy should not be driven by greed, not just greed at the highest levels, at which it is far too easy to point fingers, but the greed in our own hearts, which is just as responsible for our current crisis. We must be a force that points out that all our apparent prosperity notwithstanding, it is not at all clear that our wealth actually contributed positively to the quality of our lives. We must be a force for questioning that such a small percentage of the world's population as ourselves should use such a large percentage of the world's resources. We must be a force that all people deserve basic food, shelter, and medical care, and that contrary to the way the Bible is often misunderstood, we are in fact our brother's keeper. We must be a force that protects both high and low from the unscrupulous. We as the Church are especially called to speak for justice for the poor, for an end to all oppression, and for

peace where our insatiable appetite for oil leads us to unjust war. This must be a part of our response because the Church exercises its ministry as the trustee for the poor, the oppressed, and the marginalized.

Even the Church, as the old institution it has been, is part of what is passing away, not to its death but to being made new as Christ's own Body. One of the hopes of our current situation is that we will be forced to re-examine what we are doing precisely because we cannot afford it any longer. Economic realities may give us the motivation for new insights. One subject on which we badly need new insight is in the formation and deployment of clergy. Our current system, much as with lawyers and doctors, is to produce professional practitioners, give them licenses to practice, and release them into the free-market economy as commodities to be sold to the highest bidder. It is a system that encourages clergy to see ordination as their ticket to earn a living. It is a system that encourages laypeople to see clergy as the hired help. It is time for this system to go.

The median clergy compensation in The Episcopal Church nationally is \$64,500. With pension and standard insurance benefits, the total cost to a congregation for a median-level priest is between \$82,000 and \$94,000. That means that a median-level priest is beyond the reach of 22 of our 35 congregations, those with annual incomes less than \$150,000 per year. That means that the existing free-market system of clergy placement, unless we think differently and do something differently, will likely, in time, choke the life out of 63% of our congregations, which serve 27% of our people.

I can tell you quite unequivocally that I as your Bishop do not intend to see that happen. I refuse—refuse—to write 63% of our congregations and 27% of our people off as insignificant. Their ministries matter. It is this 63% of our congregations that often

represent the only viable alternative to fundamentalism in their communities and the only connection between faith and social ministry in their communities and the only place where some people we exist to serve could possibly find a church home where they might not be judged because of sexual orientation or because they have AIDS or because they are single or because they are divorced or because they do not see Charles Darwin as the enemy of God. It is this 27% of our people who live out their ministries in that part of our Diocese where the witness of being an Episcopalian is the hardest to make, and it is a witness they make on behalf of all of us and for which they deserve our support.

So why is it that the economic realities of the free-market system of placing priests are so out of line with the realities of where the Church, at least in a diocese like ours, is living its life? It is related to another economic reality about how much money it costs to make a priest. The cost of training someone to be a priest in a residential seminary of The Episcopal Church is upwards of \$120,000, which doesn't even count the cost of leaving jobs and home behind in order to go. A huge portion of that \$120,000 is almost always borne by the seminarian through debt. A seminarian with \$120,000 of debt has little choice but to seek to maximize earning. Who could blame them? In truth, though, the cost is much higher than \$120,000, but it is hidden because the seminaries institutionally bear the remainder of the cost. And that additional cost, which is astronomical, is proving to be something the seminaries themselves can no longer bear.

Over the course of the last year, one Episcopal seminary has closed. Another has sold a large part of its campus. Another has closed one of its two campuses and moved into a facility in partnership with another denomination. At least one other is in very real financial distress and may have to close. This is not only a phenomenon of The

Episcopal Church. The Lexington Theological Seminary of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) recently announced a complete restructuring that will eliminate half of its faculty and staff positions. We are finding as the Church that the denominational residential seminary model, by which the vast majority of our current clergy were trained, is something we can no longer afford. It is passing away before our eyes.

We have outlived a one-size-fits-all approach to providing ordained leadership for the people of God. The old system might still make sense for those entering the ordination process with the intention of earning a living as a professional, and with enough time ahead of them for everyone involved—both seminarian and Church—to make the investment reasonable. Some variation, perhaps a local course of study supplemented by a shorter amount of time away at an Episcopal seminary for those seeking to work in the Church for a shorter time, makes sense. But I am firmly convinced that part of how God will make the Church new is through entirely new thinking about how we prepare men and women to serve as priests and deacons without intending to have to pay them to do it.

It should not be an impediment to ordination that someone wants to serve the Church for love alone. After all, it is what our laypeople have always done in serving the church. Our baptismal theology suggests that laypeople have been the right model all along. It is part, I am convinced, of the new thing God is bringing to be. Accordingly, I have asked the Commission on Ministry to work with me to create such a formation program, one that prepares people to serve our Church as volunteers, to train laypeople in the ministry of the laity and to train some to become deacons and priests. Our existing Deacons' School is working well. What we need now is a school for forming priests

similarly. To serve our churches in the future—at least some of them, and in our case most of them—we are going to have to raise up clergy who have another way to earn a living besides being a priest and are willing to use it. I propose that this can be done without sacrificing the value that we place on having an educated clergy. In fact, I think if we set our minds to it, we can actually do better at producing educated clergy than the current system. I am currently working with a group of other bishops who recognize the need to do something differently, and I have scheduled conversations with seminary leadership to discuss some creative options in light of the realities they themselves are having to face. The life of a great many of our congregations depends on this sort of thinking.

I am calling on men and women of the Diocese of Lexington who have long thought they might have a vocation to be a deacon or priest but serve without compensation to present themselves. We need you. We have important ministries for you. We should not affirm one single vocation because someone is willing to serve cheaply. We should not turn away one single vocation because someone doesn't fit neatly into the old model of how to do things. And if you present yourselves, we will find a way to form you more creatively than packing you off to a three-year residential seminary and still make you a fully competent priest or deacon, capable in every way of holding your own with clergy educated in the old way, which is actually not as hard as they would like you to believe, and maybe even doing it better because the old way has more than a few deficiencies of its own, and still recognizing the reality that you do not intend to earn your living in the church system.

Most directly, the lives of our 11 smallest congregations depend on this working. The lives of these congregations was very much on my mind 18 months ago when we formed the Small Church Ministry Consortium. Four congregations agreed to share one full-time priest and fill in sacramental, pastoral, and teaching needs with lay and clergy volunteers (or sometimes with supply clergy, of which we now have very few). The Consortium has had its successes and missteps. One of its great successes is the much greater availability of pastoral care. Something it has not yet been able to achieve is to engage its four congregations in active mission in their small communities, although there are encouraging signs in some of them. If we stick with it, and with the sensitive pastoral leadership of Janey Wilson, we will get there. But revitalizing the important missions of these small churches depends on the availability of volunteer priests who can be supervised by the Consortium Director. To make this important experiment in ministry work, we are going to need new kinds of priests—trained in a different way and deployed in a different way.

The other 11 congregations of the 22 I mentioned most at risk in need of something new have annual incomes between \$50,000 and \$150,000. Generally speaking, these churches have the resources to support some sort of stipendiary clergy but nowhere near what is necessary to compete for clergy in the free-market system. Here is another startling reality. Of those 11, six are currently seeking priests—six! I plan to propose to them the formation of a second, but somewhat different, consortium, a Training and Development Consortium. The idea I would like to explore with them is recruiting six of the best and brightest new seminary graduates we can find to live in their communities and serve their churches in return for our diocesan minimum compensation

plus the assuming of a portion of their seminary indebtedness. For our parts, we would jointly provide a mentor for the new priests, a recognized teacher in clergy leadership for the new priests (perhaps by electronic media), and a recognized teacher in congregational development for the new priests and their lay leadership (again, perhaps by electronic media). The incentive for the congregations would be an affordable way to provide clergy leadership and the opportunity to develop. The incentive for the new clergy would be the opportunity to learn and gain some valuable experience, to have some of their loans paid off, and I hope, to be infused with a spirit of mission that is characteristic of our diocese.

The Church will not be renewed by the clergy alone. Clergy leadership matters, a reality that is brought home to me more every day, but it is not sufficient. Both our clergy and our laity need new hearts for mission, passions to serve, and entrepreneurial spirits more than they need a professional vested interest in the status quo. The old models of clergy as government employees, which we inherited from our established church past, and clergy as tenured faculty, which is even ceasing to be in the academic world from which we borrowed it in the first place, are passing away. Something new is coming.

For example, I want to point to Carol Ruthven, one of our newest priests. She is the Rector of St. Andrew's, Lexington. St. Andrew's is a small congregation. Carol is employed only part-time. She did not wait around for someone to make work for her and find the funds to pay for it. She went out and found a community with a need—in her case, veterans and their families dealing with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder—and she gathered them together, and she began to serve them. She didn't stop there. She hung a

big banner on the front door of St. Andrew's, which is located next to Transylvania University, that reads "Students Welcome." Deacon Lois Howard is another example. She realized that the methods of the Godly Play program, which she had been using for years as a Christian educator in working with children, had application to Alzheimer's patients. She did not wait for someone to put something together and go in search of a priest to hire. She saw a community with a need and she gathered it together and set about doing something. Billie Stockton is a laywoman. She has worked in the state prison system and for years has had a concern for children whose parents were incarcerated. She dreamed of having a camp where those children could be cared for. And so last summer Camp Haven, a day camp for those children, was held at Mission House. It happened on a shoe string budget. She did not wait for someone else to tell her what to do. She saw a community with a need and she gathered it together and did something. It is no surprise to me that all three persons I mentioned as examples of having a heart for mission, a passion to serve, and an entrepreneurial spirit are women.

What this new Church that God is bringing into being looks like is something less institutional and more oriented to finding a community in need and gathering it together, not at all unlike the vision of hope that the Prophet Ezekiel had in the most desolate of situations, enough to make ours look rosy.

The hand of the Lord came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. He led me all around them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. He said to me, "Mortal, can these bones live?" ... Then he said to me, "Prophecy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus says the Lord God to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. I will lay sinews on you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the Lord. . . . Then he said to me, "Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off

completely.’ Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord God: I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves,....And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people. I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, ...; then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken and will act, says the Lord.”³

What I hope for us as the ministers of God, ordained and not ordained, is the gathering of dry bones into new communities. They may well be non-traditional communities. They may well be communities like the one I wrote about that I found in the barber shop last year—young people who were gathered together in the context of a need of having their hair cut and found themselves wanting to engage the desperate poverty of Haiti in a creative way. They will be the communities like the one Fr. Chuck Ellestad put together at a nursing home in Lawrenceburg, which is now served by Deacon John Borders and Leonard and Vicki Mackey, laypeople. We, like Ezekiel, have good news to tell people and it is my hope in the next year that we will start telling it, not telling about the institution—there are plenty of institutions out there; telling about Jesus—there is only one Jesus.

The budget placed before you includes a plan to begin to help us to do that. First, there will be a conference and training on how to invite others to church and make them welcome once they get there. We are going to back that up with an ad campaign on National Public Radio that announces who we are, perhaps that “‘Morning Edition’ has been brought to you by The Episcopal Church, celebrating diversity and practicing tolerance since 1559,” or that “‘Car Talk’ has been brought to you by The Episcopal Church, where smoky exhaust is a good thing,” or that “‘Wait, Wait, Don’t Tell Me’ has been brought to you by The Episcopal Church, which learned its lesson from the Inquisition and has been encouraging people to think for themselves ever since,” or that

³ Ezek. 37: 1-6, 11-14.

“‘All Things Considered’ has been brought to you by The Episcopal Church because ‘all things considered’ pretty much sums us up.” The real work, though, is going to have to be done by you and not the radio. You are going to have to be made new. You are going to have to be willing to look at the fact that your beautiful, historic building with a steep flight of steps in front of it says that people in wheelchairs aren’t welcome. You’re going to have to be willing to look at the fact that the missing letter on your church sign you’ve been meaning to replace one day says you don’t care about your church. You’re going to have to be willing to look at the fact that no Sunday school says that you don’t have a place for children. You’re going to have to be willing to look at the fact that just because you’re the friendliest place in the world to each other may be working against you in terms of meeting the visitors who happen to show up. You’re going to have to be willing to look at the fact that ignoring a visitor fumbling through the Prayer Book says that you are a clique. You’re going to have to be willing to look at the fact that when you leave church to go eat lunch at the racially exclusive country club, it may say to a black person that they aren’t really welcome. And you’re going to have to look at the fact that when you do not use Spanish, something around 10% of your potential membership is barred from entering your door.

Growth in The Episcopal Church in the future is going to come in reaching out to people who do not look like us and may not think like us and may even challenge us in all kinds of ways, at least if we can find the faith and courage to embrace the new thing that God is bringing about among us. We need to include African-Americans as well as African expatriates and refugees. We need to include our new neighbors from Latin America, particularly from Mexico. We need to include college students.

Regarding Latinos and college students, I will be working during the year to bring two proposals forward for next year. First, I want to invite congregations willing to start a Hispanic mission to apply for a diocesan grant that would (1) pay a bonus of \$5,000 to their Spanish-speaking priest and (2) subsidize their efforts by a \$5,000 reduction in their diocesan assessment. The second proposal is to offer a grant to make the same assessment reduction for congregations who undertake approved plans for ministry with college students, not necessarily involving clergy. Ministry, after all, belongs to the laity, and some of the most effective college ministry I have ever seen done has been done by laypeople. Regarding African expatriates and refugees, I am now looking for a way to help a priest from Africa, who will be visiting in our Diocese for the next few years for study, start a new ministry.

There are other signs that old ways of doing things are passing away and that the new is breaking in. Sometimes it is very disturbing, but sometimes it takes being disturbed to see a new way. In the last few years, the Diocese of North Carolina has sold its camp and conference center. The Diocese of Pennsylvania has voted to sell its camp and conference center. The Diocese of Milwaukee has closed its camp. The Diocese of West Virginia is exploring the possibility of closing its camp. The Diocese of Western North Carolina and the Diocese of East Tennessee are struggling to keep their camps open. I need not point out to you that every one of those dioceses is larger than ours, some much larger and much wealthier.

I tell you quite honestly, we cannot afford the way we are doing our camping ministry now. As I have reported to you, during the previous five years preceding our last Convention, we have spent \$248,000 of income primarily from congregational

assessments and \$254,000 of unrestricted endowment assets to cover the Cathedral Domain's operating losses. In 2008, we used another \$72,000. Since our last convention, we have not made the progress we needed to make to preserve this important asset of our Diocese. Last year in my convention address, I told you that unless we did something differently we had less than ten years before we would no longer be able to afford to keep the Cathedral Domain open. We did not do things differently. It turns out that I was overly optimistic, economic collapse has decreased the value of our reserves, and that we have wasted a year. I want you to hear me say in total candor, that at the current rate of loss, we have less than five years left. We are being forced to do things differently for our own good. I am determined that we will do things differently in the current year, as I am about to explain.

I have had the Cathedral Domain very much in my mind as I planned for a staff reorganization, which has now been endorsed by the Personnel Committee, the Budget Committee, and the Executive Council. The reorganization affects the Cathedral Domain in several ways.

First, the plan recognizes that we have expected more than was reasonable or fair of Andy Sigmon. We have expected this one person to be a literal jack of all trades—camp director, administrator, maintenance superintendent, caretaker, fundraiser, development officer, innkeeper, strategic planner, marketing representative, and religious educator. It was not ever fair, and this is the first thing we are going to do differently. The reorganization plan delegates some of those jobs to other people based on their self-expressed strengths, weaknesses, passions, and areas of interest. Andy will remain the Director of the Cathedral Domain. His job will be to concentrate on operations and

maintenance. Administrative functions, along with other administrative functions for several different ministries, are being concentrated in Bryant Kibler as Archdeacon and Bishop's Deputy for Administration. Sam McDonald, our new Canon to the Ordinary, will concentrate on financial development, again for several different areas of ministry, and on marketing the Domain, particularly unused capacity in the summer months and the conference center in the winter months. Finally, the plan calls for hiring a religious formation missionary to oversee the religious program during the summer months at the Domain. After all, unless we are making disciples of Jesus, young Christians deepened in their faith and committed to serving the poor and transforming their world, we really have no business in this ministry at all.

The job of administrator at the Domain is being eliminated from the Domain budget because the administrative functions are being transferred to Mission House. In its place, I have created the position of Administrative Assistant to facilitate the work of the Deputy for Administration, who will be handling the Domain's administrative work, and the Deputy for Financial Affairs, as well as helping with other tasks at Mission House including hospitality, both in person and on the telephone, so that we can better serve the needs of the people of our Diocese. Cindy Sigmon will fill the new job.

All these changes mean two things. The first is that we will be better able to accomplish the essential tasks that must be accomplished. The second is that we will be able to fully fund the operating subsidy requested by the Camps and Conferences Board. This is the first time in many years we have been able to do that.

At our last Convention, you gave me as the Bishop the responsibility of nominating members to the Camps and Conferences Board. Later at this Convention, I

will bring before you four nominees who have been chosen to fill in those areas of expertise, particularly in sound administration and financial management, but also in spirituality and camp management, not otherwise currently represented on the Board.

Finally, as our canons vest responsibility for the Domain primarily in the Bishop and the Executive Council, I will ask the Executive Council to create a committee for Domain oversight in order to strengthen it in its task to fulfill its duties. It is my intention that there will be an overlap in membership between this Executive Council committee and the Camps and Conferences Board.

It is my most ardent intention that at our 2010 convention I will report two things to you: (1) that we have made progress in doing things differently for the betterment of our camping ministry and (2) that the Domain has not had to draw further on its unrestricted endowment assets. If we can do that, I will, in my address to you next year, call for a capital campaign to breathe life into these bones.

Finally, as the minister charged with special attention to the unity of the Church, I think I need to speak just a little about the larger Church, of which we are but a small part. I was deeply touched to experience the global Church over the two and one-half weeks I met with other Bishops of the Anglican Communion this summer at the decennial Lambeth Conference. I will not be able, ever again, to express myself as a Bishop of the Church or to take my share in the councils of the Church without thinking of the brothers and sisters I met when gathered together under the spiritually profound guidance of the Archbishop of Canterbury. Some of you have heard me tell of the conversations in my small group and one exchange in particular with a Bishop from Burundi. We had, shall we say, an intense but completely respectful exchange one day

about the pastoral care of gay and lesbian persons but to no resolution. I went to speak to him on the last day of the Conference as we were waiting in line to be transported to Canterbury Cathedral. We greeted each other warmly. He spoke these words: “The next time we talk, we must be careful to define our terms.” It is highly significant, I think, first of all, that he anticipated there would be a next time. I take great hope from that. Also, he had obviously been thinking about our conversation and had come to the conclusion, first that I was not actually Satan, and that we were not understanding each other because we were talking about two completely different things. I took even more hope from that.

In the last few months, I am also pleased to tell you that I have had correspondence from a priest in an African country whose primate has been quite hostile to The Episcopal Church and declared his church to be out of communion with ours. The priest wrote to tell me he would be in the Diocese of Lexington, not functioning without my permission, but for study, and he asked about our churches. I responded, made some suggestions about congregations, and offered to license him to function here as a priest if his Bishop would give permission and certify that he was in good standing. I then received a very warm letter from his Bishop. I have dreams that he may help us reach out to Africans here in our diocese who are expatriates or refugees, many of whom are Anglicans. I then received another very warm letter from his bishop thanking me for my offer of hospitality and certifying the priest’s good standing. We have continued to correspond. I recently received another letter from him addressed to “My Dear Brother Bishop Stacy” and says:

I take this opportunity on behalf of my diocese and on my own behalf to wish you God’s blessings during your Diocesan Convention and always. Know of our

prayers and message of good will as you converge to reflect on God's goodness to you as a Diocese; both to the individual delegates and to you all as a Diocese. As you converge to reflect, I am also aware that you shall have an opportunity to examine the position/role of the Church at such a time when the world/society [the church inclusive] seem to be at the cross-roads. Of late I have been meditating and praying more about the Unity in Diversity within our Anglican Church. The Lord has clearly revealed to me that there is more that can unite us than the few that can divide us. God has called us to alleviate the suffering of the less fortunate and bring glad tidings to His creation. During your convention, it is a good time for you to chart the way forward of your Diocese and I pray that you shall also find time to discuss and explore on how you can increase your presence in Africa and more so in our Diocese. There is more that we can do together to the glory and honor of God. It's my prayer that God will bless your time together. Please bring our sincere love and greetings to the Convention Delegates. I know you require plenty of time to prepare for the convention. This is the most tiring/exhaustive time to plan and lead the Diocesan Convention/Synod for us as Diocesan Bishops but God's grace is sufficient. I will invite you one time to experience our Diocesan Synod which lasts for two to three days. You look at the motion and deliberations . . . it calls for the grace of God. [Some things really are universal in the Anglican experience.] . . . With the Warmest Regards from the Diocese of Eldoret, Kenya.

In that spirit, and in light of the fact that the General Convention of The Episcopal Church will meet this summer, I want you to be aware of two relevant issues. The first is the proposed repeal of Resolution B-033 and the second is the proposal to begin a process that would produce rites for the blessing of same sex relationships for further study (not for enactment but for further study). As your chief pastor, I want you to know my position, and you have a right to know my position, and I have every right to ask you to respect it as mine, just as you have every right to ask me to respect yours as yours.

Resolution B-033 calls upon Bishops and Standing Committees to "exercise restraint by not consenting to the consecration of any candidate to the episcopate whose manner of life presents a challenge to the wider church and will lead to further strains on communion." The General Convention has called upon our Standing Committee and me to do something; it has not mandated that we do something and, indeed, it could not

mandate such an action without amending the constitution of this Church. For now, no such candidate has been elected Bishop since this was passed. If one is, I will very carefully consider the General Convention's request, the voices of others throughout the world I have heard, and the voices here at home I have heard. I will reflect on where we are as a Communion and an individual Church within the Communion. I will consider the justified needs of all my people, I will seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and only then will I decide whether or not to give consent accordingly. Therefore, I see no reason to repeal this resolution and believe that doing so would certainly be misinterpreted as a very hostile act by our Church toward the good faith concerns others have expressed. I cannot tell you what I would do if called upon to consent to such an election, but I can tell you I intend to vote against the repeal of B-033.

As to beginning a process that would produce a draft liturgical rite to be considered for blessing same sex relationships, the analysis I apply is primarily pastoral. I believe that such rites would be helpful tools in some congregations to support people of good faith and good will in living holy lives. Having a draft of a rite to look at, in my opinion, would also help us do the theology we need to do to address this issue and would contribute to the dialogue the Communion has long promised to have. Though it will also probably be misinterpreted by some, the conversation we have promised to have, the theological work we have been asked to do, and the pastoral obligations I feel toward our gay and lesbian members, lead me to intend to vote in favor of such an action.

In closing, let me say to you how joyous it has been for me to be back from my sabbatical. My dissertation has been well-received, and I expect to be granted the degree of Master of Laws in Canon Law of Cardiff University in July. (I can't go because I'll be

at General Convention.) I am deeply grateful to you for making it possible for me to do this work, which I hope will benefit all of us in some way. I know that the time away has refreshed my vision for our work here in the Diocese of Lexington and made me long to resume it with you. My conviction is increased, and I move forward with you now with, above all else, the prayer that you will know how much your Bishop loves you, and with the request for your prayers for me and for our ministry together.

Thank you.

The Rt. Rev. Stacy F. Sauls
Bishop of Lexington