

ADDRESS TO THE CLERGY OF THE DIOCESE OF SOUTH CAROLINA—AUGUST 13, 2009
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Among the many doctrines of our Faith to which I might ask you to turn your thoughts this morning it is first to that wonderful doctrine of God's Providence. It was to this doctrine that my distant predecessor, The Rt. Reverend Robert Smith, first bishop of South Carolina, turned when he addressed the Colonial Assembly which gathered at St. Philips Church in the early months of 1775 as the winds of war were blowing on the eve of the American Revolution. Of course he was not at that time a bishop. There were no bishops on these shores, though Anglicanism was well into its second century on this continent. Nor was he a bishop when he returned to Charleston from imprisonment and banishment in 1783 to give his homecoming sermon, where once again he spoke of an "overruling Providence". As perhaps you know, his banishment to a northern colony was due to his having taken words and arms against his former king and country—and having thrown in his lot with his adopted home, he risked and lost everything. He was taken to Philadelphia bereaved of wife (she had recently died), and bereft of home and parish. But on that public occasion in February 1775, before he had ever fired a musket towards a British troop, this unlikely patriot declared his deepest allegiance:

"We form schemes of happiness and deceive ourselves with a weak imagination of security, without ever taking God into the question; no wonder then if our hopes prove abortive, and the conceits of our vain minds end in disappointment and sorrow. For we are inclined to attribute our prosperity to the wisdom of our own councils, and the arm of our own flesh, we become forgetful of him from whom our strength and wisdom are derived; and are then betrayed into that fatal security, which ends in shame, in misery and ruin."

Is it not towards such false peace or fatal security that we are tempted too often and too soon to fling ourselves?

I believe for us to discern God's purpose and role for this diocese in this current challenge, and then to live it out faithfully, will involve each of us in more struggles and suffering than we have yet invested—for we have invested as yet, so little. This is not a challenge for a bishop or even a Standing Committee to face alone. None of us can afford to keep the members of our parishes uninformed of the challenges that lie ahead. Consequently, since I see struggle and suffering before each of us, it is towards God's beneficent providence I chose first to turn our attention this morning. And where can we find a text to so focus our thoughts on this strengthening doctrine than that which is found in the prophet Isaiah—spoken to those in exile?

"Do you not know? Do you not hear? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is he who sits above the circle of the earth and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers; who stretches out the heavens like a curtain and spreads them like a tent to dwell in; who brings princes to nothing and makes the rulers of the earth as emptiness. Scarcely are they planted, scarcely sown, scarcely has their stem taken root in the earth when he blows on them, and they wither, and the tempest carries them off like stubble." (Isaiah 40:21-24)

It is under such a godly Providence that we live—and it is under this godly providence, whether we act or merely stand firm in prayerful posture, that we “shall mount up with wings like eagles, [we] shall run and not be weary, [we] shall walk and not faint.”

In our present situation some would counsel us that it is past time to cut our moorings from The Episcopal Church and take refuge in a harbor without the pluralism and false teachings that surround us in both the secular culture and within our Church; others speak to us of the need for patience, to “let the Instruments of Unity do their work”—that now is not yet the time to act. Still others seem paralyzed; though no less distressed than us by the developments within our Church, they seem to take a posture of insular denial of what is inexorably coming upon us all. While I have no immediate solution to the challenges we face—it is certainly neither a hasty departure nor a paralyzed passivity I counsel. Either of these I believe, regardless of what godly wisdom they may be for others, would be for us a false peace and a “fatal security” which in time (and brief at that) would only betray us. Others in their given circumstances must do what they believe God has called them to do.

One must remember, however, that it is an ever changing landscape in Anglicanism today so there is a need for dynamism lest one becomes too passive, and for provisionality ‘lest one should not notice the engagement has moved on to a new field of action.

The false Gospel of an Indiscriminate Inclusivity

It is perfectly understandable to me that many among us may look at the developments during the last several decades and believe it is The Episcopal Church (TEC) that is our problem. Those of us who refer to ourselves as reasserters, conservatives, Anglo-Catholics or Evangelicals, or sometimes under the sweeping moniker of “orthodox” have often felt ourselves driven, if not out, then to the margins of this Church. We refer sometimes with derision to the Presiding Bishop (whether Bps Browning, Griswold or Jefferts Schori). We speak of 815, the “National” Church, the General Convention, as problems we have to react to, and believe we know what it is we are fighting, or are in conflict with. Sometimes it all comes under the title of TEC. Never realizing perhaps that here at least in South Carolina we are the Church: The Episcopal Church. It is only as I’ve allowed my Lord to remove the anger toward these “institutions” of the Church that I can recognize with greater clarity what it is I need to engage—and even fight against.

When the apostle Paul heard that the churches of Galatia (Gal 1:2) were being misled by a “new” gospel, turning away from Christ and his grace it was not the churches themselves he attacked. Certainly he spoke firmly when he penned or dictated the words “O foolish Galatians! who has bewitched you.....” Or stated in those opening verses of the letter “I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.” His sharp words addressed the false teaching and those who preached it. (Galatians 1:6–9). So too in our present context it is not The Episcopal Church that is the problem, it is those who have cloaked it with so many strands of false doctrine that we can well wonder if indeed it can be salvaged. Like an invading vine unnatural to the habitat that has covered a once elegant, old

growth forest with what to some looks like a gracious vine it is in fact decorative destruction. What may look like a flower may be bramble.

We face a multitude of false teachings, which like an intrusive vine, is threatening The Episcopal Church as we have inherited and received it from our ancestors. I have called this the false Gospel of Indiscriminate Inclusivity because I see a common pattern in how the core doctrines of our faith are being systematically deconstructed. I must by necessity be brief and cannot give any of these concerns the attention they deserve.

- **The Trinity.** One of the doctrines under barrage in our Church is an orthodox understanding of the Trinity. At the last three General Conventions I have been concerned about the lack of Eucharists according to the rites in the Book of Common Prayer. Even this I might be able to overlook if the rites that were employed were not so devoid of references to God the Father. In more than a few of these worship services the only reference to God the Father actually in the liturgy was the Lord's Prayer. In the name of inclusion there's the perception by some (a variant of radical feminism I suppose) that the references to the Father, and the pronoun "he" is some lingering patriarchal holdover. Yet it has always intrigued me that in all of the Hebrew Scriptures there are only a handful of references to God as Father. If one wants to locate the authority of the Church to worship God as Father one need look no further than Jesus himself. It was he who called God "Abba" and taught the disciples to prayer "Our Father." Frankly, if Jesus got that one so wrong, why should we turn to him for anything? As many of you know there is more here than I have time to explore this morning.

- **Uniqueness of Christ.** In my opinion the current Presiding Bishop has repeatedly been irresponsible with her comments regarding the doctrine of the Uniqueness and Universality of Christ. This will not surprise you, for I said as much to her when she visited us shortly after my consecration. In answering questions about the Uniqueness and Universality of Christ she has repeatedly suggested that it is not up to her to decide what the mechanism is God uses to save people. But, quite to the contrary, it is her responsibility as a bishop of the Church to proclaim the saving work of Jesus Christ and to teach what it is the Scriptures and the Church teach. Anything less from us who are bishops is an abdication of our teaching office. Otherwise how will the world know to whom to come? How will the unschooled within the Church know what they should believe? I do not cite this to be controversial but to reference the pervasiveness of this inclusive gospel that would, in its attempt to include all people and all religions, fail to rightly delight in, celebrate and worship him before whom every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that he is Lord. It does not honor another religion to not be forthright about one's own. As the English Bishop Michael Nazir-Ali observed, "Fudging important issues and attempting a superficial harmonization gives a sense of unity that is untrue and ... prevents real differences from being acknowledged and discussed." And we haven't time to discuss brief swipes toward confessional approaches to the faith except to ask—wasn't the Lordship of Christ the first confession of the faithful—even in the face of Caesar's claim to Lordship? Did not St. Paul teach that if we confess with our lips and believe in our hearts that Jesus Christ is Lord we shall be saved? Does not the baptismal rite require such a formulaic statement of the individual before the assembled body who witness it? Such statements, unfortunately, make it necessary for us to correct rather than to support leadership.

- **Scriptural Authority.** This is such a comprehensive dimension of our present crisis in the church that one hardly knows where to begin. But one can hardly do better than St. Ambrose's statement that "the whole of Holy Scripture be a feast for the soul." How seldom one hears upon us who are bishops in Tec such glowing statements about the Bible. In my experience all too many of our bishops and priests seem to mine the scriptures for minerals to use in vain idolatries. There is too little confidence expressed in its trustworthiness; the authority and uniqueness of revelation. Indeed, as J.V. Langmead-Casserly once put it, "We have developed a method of studying the Word of God from which a Word of God never comes." Too often supposed conundrums or difficulties are brought up, seemingly in order to detract from traditional understandings, never considering the damage to the faithful's trust in God and his Word. Ridiculous arguments such as shellfish and mixed fabrics are dragged out (long reconciled by the Fathers of the Church, as well as the Anglican Reformers) in order to confuse the ill-taught or the untutored in theology. And those who are intellectually sophisticated, schooled in many academic disciplines, but dreadfully untaught in the Bible and theology, are, through little fault of their own, except for naively trusting generations of slothful priests and bishops, are led astray. We must be willing to speak out against this.

- **Baptismal Theology detached from Biblical and Catholic doctrine.** The phrase heard frequently at General Convention 2009 was "All the sacraments for all the Baptized". One suspects that great Catholic teacher of the 4th Century, St. Cyril of Jerusalem would have been unconvinced for he wrote tellingly of Simon Magus, "he was baptized, but not enlightened. His body was dipped in water, but admitted not the Spirit to illuminate his heart. His body went down and came up; but his soul was not buried together with Christ nor with him raised." (see Acts 8:9-24) Nevertheless, this inadequate baptismal theology was used to argue for the full inclusion of partnered GLBT persons to all the orders of the Church—deacons, priests and bishops. What it singularly misses is the straightforward teaching of the catechism, not to mention of the New Testament's "teaching that baptism is a dying to self and sin and a rising to new life in Christ." (N.T. Wright) Even if one would turn to the simplicity of the catechism one would encounter this question and answer: Q. What is required of us at Baptism? A. It is required that we renounce Satan, repent of our sins, and accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior. Since when has baptism been the ticket to ordination in the Church? The Archbishop's perceptive comment in section 8 of "Communion, Covenant and our Anglican Future" is pertinent here.

- **Human Sexuality.** While it has been a clever device of some in recent years to refer to the varied approach to marriage in the different epochs of biblical history, often done in ways that are intended to bring more confusion rather than clarity, (ignoring that well honored hermeneutic of interpreting the less clear passages of Holy Scripture by the clearer, or not interpreting one text in such a way that it is repugnant to another) we are back with that tendency of ordained leaders of the Church and professors of religion to confound the faithful rather than to instruct—it has been used repeatedly in this current debate regarding Human Sexuality and the establishment of an inclusive moral equivalency of GLBT sexual unions with the Christian understanding of marriage between a man and a woman.

- **Constitution & Canons—Common Life.** These, and other examples that could be cited, are illustrative of this "new gospel" of Indiscriminate Inclusivity that began with a denigration of the

Holy Scriptures, then, step by step has brought the very core teachings of the Christian faith under its distorting and destructive sway. Thus, if the Scriptures should teach something contrary to this “gospel’s” most recent incarnation, (take for instance the full inclusion of GLBT) then the Scripture’s broad themes or individual passages, which plainly oppose current understanding of same-sex genital behavior, must be deconstructed. And if the bonds of affection within the Worldwide Anglican Communion are a hindrance to this gospel of inclusivity then the moral authority and role of the Instruments of Unity are downplayed. Most recently at GC’09 when the BCP’s marriage service, rubrics, and catechism, as well as the Constitution & Canons speak of marriage as exclusively between a man and a woman, therein conflicting with this inclusive “gospel”, resolution CO56 was passed contrary to our own order of governance and common life—thus one by one, the Holy Scriptures, the teachings of the Church, the Anglican Communion, the Ecumenical relationships with the other bodies of the Church Catholic, and now even our own Book of Common Prayer and Constitutions & Canons are subjugated to this “new” gospel. It is a foreign vine like kudzu draping the old growth forest of Episcopalianism with decorative destruction.

As I wrote in my post-Convention Letter to the Clergy “There is an increasingly aggressive displacement within this Church of the gospel of Jesus Christ’s transforming power by the “new” gospel of indiscriminate inclusivity which seeks to subsume all in its wake. It is marked by an increased evangelistic zeal and mission that hints at imperialistic plans to spread throughout the Communion. This calls for a bold response.” It is not in my opinion the right action for this diocese to retreat from a thorough engagement with this destructive “new” gospel. As the prophet Ezekiel was called by the Lord to be a Watchman, to sound the alarm of judgment—to warn Israel to turn from her wickedness and live. We are called to speak forthrightly to The Episcopal Church and others, but even more specifically to the thousands of everyday Episcopalians who do not yet know the fullness of this present cultural captivity of the Church. Clearly this is not about the virtue of being “excluding”; it is about being rightly discerning about what is morally and spiritually appropriate. As the Archbishop of Canterbury suggests the Church’s life cannot be “wholly determined by what society at large considers usual or acceptable or determines to be legal”.

Quite beyond this challenge within our Church this “gospel of indiscriminate inclusion” is as much a movement of the larger European and North American culture as it is a movement within the church. Thus, if one should seek to get away from it by leaving TEC, joining some other denomination, or continuing Anglican body (and please know, I do not say this critically of those who have chosen or felt called to leave) it will not free us from having to engage this challenge. As I’ve said on more than one occasion, this indiscriminant inclusivity is coming to a neighborhood near you. If you are in TEC and resisting this aggressive march you are already on the front lines. If you have a stomach to engage the battle you are rightly situated. It is now a matter of whether one is prepared to engage the challenge or not. We may prefer a false peace or fatal security but don’t think for a minute this challenge will not find us.

Our Present Strategy: Four Guiding Principles

The Lordship of Jesus Christ and the Sufficiency of Holy Scripture:

The first principle I wish to affirm in our diocesan life is that the Church lives its life under the Lordship of Jesus Christ and under and upon the authority of Holy Scripture. As Article XX in the Articles of Religion states, "...it is not lawful for the Church to ordain anything that is contrary to God's Word written, neither may it so expound one place of Scripture, that it be repugnant to another." (BCP p. 871) Since so many within our diocese may have been confused or disturbed by the newspaper and journal reports of the actions of General Convention 2009, and through reading the very resolutions D025 and C056 themselves, as well as the various contradictory statements by leaders in this Church interpreting what these resolutions mean, the Standing Committee and I are proposing that a Special Meeting of Convention (Diocesan Constitution Art.II sec.2) be called for Saturday, October 24th to deal with several concerns that need to be addressed. One such concern is what may be actually understood by the candidate for ordination as he or she makes the Oath of Conformity, and what the worshipping congregation will in the present climate understand by such a vow. When the ordinand pledges himself to "... solemnly engage to conform to the doctrine, discipline and worship of The Episcopal Church." and variations thereof, "in accordance to the canons of this Church..." does that imply adherence to these recent resolutions of GC'09? The Standing Committee and I are proposing a resolution for Convention to approve the reading of a letter prior to the spoken vow, and attached with the signed document of conformity, at every ordination in this diocese, thereby making clear what the Church has historically meant by such an oath—explicating what the Book of Common Prayer means by loyalty "to the doctrine, discipline and worship of Christ as this Church has received them." (All quotations above may be found on p. 526 and 538 of the BCP)

The Appropriateness of Godly Boundaries—Withdrawal:

Secondly, there is a need to establish appropriate boundaries and differentiation. Why? There is a need for this Diocese and the faithful across TEC to recognize that the actions of General Convention 2009 in adopting resolutions D025 and C056 along with going contrary to 1) Holy Scripture, 2) tradition—that is 2000 years of the Churches interpretation of these very scriptures—understood as the catholic principle of the consensus of the faithful, 3) the mind of the Anglican Communion as expressed in the resolutions of successive Lambeth Conferences and the considered conversation of Lambeth 2008, The Anglican Consultative Council, the Primates as well as the expressed hopes of the Archbishop himself, quite staggeringly also went against 4) even TEC's own BCP, Catechism, and Constitution & Canons. It is my contention that a resolution adopted by a legislative body, contrary to the Constitution & Canons of that body, by its very adoption is made null and void. Such an institution is in violation of its own principles of governance. Therefore we cannot recognize the actions of GC'09 in passing resolutions D025 and C056 and believe that any diocese or bishop which allows partnered gay or lesbian persons to be ordained in holy orders, or allows blessings of same sex unions or "marriages" is in violation of the Canons. Frankly, it is rather staggering that many in the HOB after arguing in D025 that we needed to return to being guided by our canons in regard to the ordination process instead of BO33, that this same convention then gave permission for bishops to disregard those very canons' teaching toward marriage. I have personally witnessed the House of Bishops deposing sitting bishops for what they believe was an indiscreet disregard of the Church's Constitution & Canons. Now hardly a year later the same governing body votes to give certain bishops the permission to do so!

This begs the question—how an institution, having jettisoned what for 2000 years has been the understood teaching of Holy Scripture and collective wisdom of Christendom, and taken refuge in its vaunted polity as expressed in its Constitution & Canons, can allow itself to proceed without first changing those canons? Two reasons: 1) The agenda of Inclusivity is viewed by many to be of such overriding importance as an issue of justice that it subjugates everything under its rubrics. 2) The level of conformity is so staggering that only a few would seem capable of resisting its pressure. And too often, even then the resistance is “This will not fly back home” rather than “I believe this is theologically wrong”. The Standing Committee and bishop will be proposing a resolution to come before the special convention that this diocese begin withdrawing from all bodies of governance of TEC that have assented to actions contrary to Holy Scripture; the doctrine, discipline and worship of Christ as this church has received them; the resolutions of Lambeth which have expressed the mind of the Communion; the Book of Common Prayer (p.422-423) and the Constitution & Canons of TEC (Canon 18:1.2.b) until such bodies show a willingness to repent of such actions. Let no one think this is a denial of the vows a priest or bishop makes to participate in the councils of governance. This is not a flight into isolation; nor is it an abandonment of duty, but the protest of conscience. It is recognition that the actions of GC’09 were in such blatant disregard and violation of Holy Scripture, the bonds of affection, and our own Constitution & Canons that one is led by reasoned conviction to undertake an intrepid resistance to the tyranny of the majority over judicious authority; therein erring both in Faith and Order.

Domestic Engagement for Relief and Mission:

Thirdly, I have noted in my Post-Convention Letter to the Clergy of the Diocese that we need to find a place not only to survive, but to thrive, and that this needs to be faithful, relational and structural. But this is not merely for our sake, but for others. I have been in conversation with bishops of other dioceses in TEC which find themselves in similar positions of isolation. We have discussed the possibility of developing gatherings of bishops, clergy, and laity for the express purpose of encouragement, education and mission. These gatherings in different regions of the country could bring internationally recognized Christian leaders from across the Anglican Communion to address such things as Holy Scripture, Christian doctrine, issues of pressing concern within the church, as well as the ever important work of ministry, evangelism, mission and church planting. These Dioceses in Missional Relationship I believe can create an environment which will lead to positive growth and concerted actions not merely for future survival but more importantly for growth and expansion.

There is also a need to find ways to support conservative parishes and missions in dioceses where there is isolation or worse. I would like to encourage congregations in this diocese to create missional relationships with “orthodox” congregations isolated across North America. There, consequently, is a need for the laity in South Carolina to be awakened and mobilized for engagement. This includes but is not limited to courses in theology which enables them to articulate their faith in the face of an aggressive displacement biblical and catholic teaching—not only in order to evangelize the lost, but to encourage the laity across the church who are surrounded by teaching that is clearly contrary to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Let me say it quite candidly, there may be effective initiatives the laity can undertake that would not be possible for the clergy in this present climate.

The Emergence of 21st Century Anglicanism:

Fourthly, we need to be guided by the principle that we are called to help shape an emerging Anglicanism that is sufficient of the 21st Century. The Archbishop in his recent “Communion, Covenant and our Anglican Future” rightly noted that “it would be a great mistake to see the present situation as no more than an unhappy set of tensions within a global family struggling to find a coherence that not all its members actually want. Rather, it is an opportunity for clarity, renewal and deeper relation with one another—and so also with Our Lord and his Father, in the power of the Spirit.” He went on to note, “If the present structures that have safeguarded our unity turn out to need serious rethinking in the near future, this is not the end of the Anglican way and it may bring its own opportunities.” Indeed, I believe it not only “may”; I believe it will. You have heard me say on several occasions, “A crisis is a terrible thing to waste.” Well, I believe we should not waste this crisis—neither the ecclesiastical crisis nor the attending economic one. And certainly we should not waste it by taking refuge in a false peace that expresses itself in a retreat into an insular parochialism or a “fatal security” which for us, at least now, would be an escape. We have the opportunity to help shape the emergence of a truly global Anglicanism—Making Biblical Anglicans for a Global Age. I believe we have a unique role to play within the Anglican Communion. If at present we play that role by being in but not of the mainstream of TEC is it any less important? We passed at our Diocesan Convention in March a resolution which asserted our authority as a diocese to sign onto the Anglican Covenant. The final section read,

“Be it further resolved, that as the Diocese of South Carolina did choose at its Diocesan Convention in 1785, to organize as a diocese, (one of the first seven dioceses in these United States to so organize in that year), and to send delegates to the first General Conventions to organize the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, and thereby freely associate its clerical and lay members with the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society—presently known as The Episcopal Church; so this same Diocese does also assert its authority to freely embrace such a Covenant in communion with the Archbishop of Canterbury, and to seek to remain a constituent member of the Anglican Communion should the Instruments of Unity allow such diocesan association.”

The Archbishop has expressed in section 25 of “Communion, Covenant and our Anglican Future” his strong hope that “elements” [dioceses?] will adopt the Covenant. I believe we ought to sign on to the Ridley Draft of the Covenant as it presently stands in all four sections. (If it means we need to withdraw from a lawsuit we withdraw from a lawsuit). Therefore we need to begin the process of studying the Ridley Draft in every deanery and parish and be prepared to vote on it either in the special convention in October or, if that’s too ambitious a time frame, no later than our Annual Diocesan Convention in March 2010.

You need to know that the Anglican Communion Development Committee has already had its first meeting and will begin this fall to vigorously establish relationships with a broad array of Provinces across the Communion. You have heard me speak of this often, including during my Bishop’s Address last March. This still strikes me as one of the most important activities we should pursue. We can work with several of the Provinces within the Communion, and, if they are so inclined to partner with us, we should work with GAFCON and ACNA from within TEC to further gospel initiatives.

I believe we are as financially strong, and as spiritually and theologically unified as any conservative diocese left in TEC. We have I believe the resources to focus on the mission and ministry within the diocese of South Carolina as well as working within TEC to shore up and encourage the faithful; and at the same time to help shape the emerging Anglicanism of the 21st Century. Admittedly, this is a tall order. Though accurate statistics are hard to come by I believe there are still more theologically orthodox believers still inside of TEC than have left. Yet they seem increasingly isolated, with few leaders to encourage them. I believe we have a moral and spiritual call/obligation to stay in the fight with those still in TEC who look to us for hope; and to stay for as long as it is within our consciences to do so. On this last caveat, clearly the clock for many of us is loudly ticking. Few of us doubt there will be a strong push to make what is now de facto, de jure in GC2012. Along with this the number of partnered GLBT priests—and quite likely bishops will continue to increase (given the recent nominees in Episcopal elections in Minnesota and Los Angeles)—putting facts on the ground which the rest of us have to react to or deal with as best we can. As events unfold it will be necessary for us to put risky facts on the ground as well.

Concluding Thoughts

But before I conclude I need to address a sensitive issue. Should a parish find it needs to be served by alternative Episcopal care I will work with them toward that end. Please know this is not my desire for any parish. It would grieve me because I have enjoyed my relationship with every congregation in this great Diocese of South Carolina. Still these are challenging times, and if I am called to lead in such an assertive manner as I have suggested here, pastoral sensitivity suggests I should give space to those who feel they need it. I hope all can recognize in the things I have addressed above the three marks of the church recognized in Evangelical Anglicanism—1) Proclamation of the Word of God; 2) the sacraments duly administered; 3) order and discipline (Art. XIX)—yet there is that fourth mark (that to which Bishop and Martyr Nicholas Ridley referred, echoing of course St. Paul in I Corinthians 13; Galatians 5:22 and nurtured in the life of the church by the Holy Spirit), 4) the mark of charity, without which we are noisy gongs and clanging cymbals. And then for most of us there's the one I just mentioned, 5) the beneficence of the historic episcopate.

I must address another thing under the rubric of love—and in this I follow the lead of Lambeth 1.10, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and I trust with the Church Catholic around the world: we are not to be in this Diocese about the business of encouraging prejudice or denying the dignity of any person, including, but not limited to, those who believe themselves to be Gay, Lesbian, Bi-Sexual, or Transgender. As those who know me well will acknowledge, it grieves me that so much of the battle has been waged here, and if the full story were to be told I believe that many who understand themselves through these categories wish it were not as well. No, we have no business fostering unexamined prejudice; so few of us are free from scars of sexual brokenness. Rather, we are constrained by the love of Christ to be primarily about the task of proclaiming the Gospel—calling all people to repentance—ourselves included; administering the sacraments; encouraging faithfulness in the body of Christ; and through the power of the Holy Spirit walking with charity in the world.

It is an increasingly fluid landscape in which we are called to do our work and at times seems to change from week to week as developments take place on several fronts. While our principles may stay consistent our strategy must be dynamic and provisional. To this end the Standing Committee and I are calling for a Special Convention of this diocese to be held on Saturday, October 24th at Christ Church, Mt. Pleasant. As bishop I am asking every parish and mission to call a congregational meeting to broadly engage these matters and to inform the delegates who will represent them at this upcoming convention. I am also asking every deanery to engage these challenges at a clericus level and in deanery meetings for clergy and lay delegates. Frankly, I don't know how to say this in any other way but to tell you that this is a call to action; of mobilization of clergy, parishes and laity. What I have stated here is only a start—the turning of the ship. While striving to stay as intact as possible—we need believers who are informed, engaged, missional and faithful.

For now our task is clear: As some within TEC are busy cutting the cords of fellowship with the larger Church through the unilateral actions of General Convention expanding policies which further tear the fabric of the Communion; our task will be to weave and braid missional relationships which strengthen far flung dioceses and provinces in the work of the gospel. As some in TEC find a hopeless refuge in the narrower restrictions of denominational autonomy, we shall find hope in a deeper and generous catholicity. In our pursuit of these principles I remind you of where I began in this address—Bishop Smith's eschewing of a fatal security which he feared would end "in shame, in misery and ruin." He refused such a comfortable course and in time it led him to risk—and to lose everything. This may one day come to us. For now what lies before us is to engage this challenge with all the will and resources of a strong and growing diocese. With the clarity of God's call, the courage to walk in step with the Spirit, and the confidence of an overruling Providence in, with and through Christ, we shall not only endure, but prevail. I leave now with this—we cannot choose to follow God without following what God has chosen for us. So, "Lead kindly, Light." Amen.