

AGENDA - Thirteenth Annual Convention
Episcopal Diocese of Eastern Michigan - October 19 & 20, 2007
St. John's Church, Saginaw

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2007

- 8:00 a.m. Registration (Hall) **POLLS OPEN**
Book Store & Booths (Hall)
- 10:00 a.m. Delegate Orientation (Sanctuary)
- 12:00 p.m. Lunch (First Presbyterian Church)
- 1:00 p.m. First Business Session (First Presbyterian Church)
- Noon Prayers and Welcome
 - Convention Business - Rules, Roll call, Credentials, Clergy Changes, Appointments
 - Introduction of Candidates
- 2:00 p.m. Special Order of Business (Keynote Address & Response)
- 5:00 p.m. Evensong (St. John's Church Sanctuary)
- 5:00 p.m. **POLLS CLOSE FOR NIGHT**
- 6:00 p.m. Food & Fellowship (Hall)

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2007

- 8:00 a.m. Registration (Hall) **POLLS OPEN**
- 8:30 a.m. Second Business Session (Sanctuary) **POLLS CLOSED**
- Morning Prayer
 - Report of Constitution and Canons
 - Ministry Minute
 - General Convention Amendments
 - Ministry Minute
 - Q & A with the Bishop
 - Elections Report
 - Courtesy Resolutions

Close of Business, Transition Hymn

- 11:00 a.m. Closing Eucharist (Sanctuary)

GENERAL RULES
Diocesan Annual Convention
October 19, 2007

1. Each business meeting of the Convention will open with a prayer.
2. All Resolutions to be considered by the Convention must be submitted in accordance with Title 1, Canon 3, Section 6.
4. All reports which have been printed and distributed to members of the Convention prior to the convening of the body and not requiring Convention action shall be presented by title only.
5. On the request of any ten members of the Convention, a roll call vote shall be taken and entered in the minutes.
5. No member of Convention shall speak twice on the same subject until all others desiring to speak shall have had the opportunity to speak one time. Each speaker shall be allowed up to three (3) minutes per speech.
6. All committees shall be appointed by the President with the consent of the Convention except where other provisions have been made.
7. Except for the election of a Bishop or Bishop Coadjutor, all elections shall be governed by the provisions of Title 1, Canon 6, Sec. 2, 3, 4.
8. The Committee on Resolutions shall report to Convention its action on each submitted Resolution.
9. The Rules contained in "Robert's Rules of Order - Revised" shall govern the Convention in all cases to which they are applicable, and in which they are not inconsistent with the Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church and this Diocese or the special rules of order of this Convention.
10. The Rules shall not be suspended or amended except by a vote of two-thirds of the members voting, a quorum being present.
11. Alternate Delegates may replace only Registered Delegates.
12. Food and drinks shall not be permitted in the Nave of the Church and other places so designated by the host Congregation.

JOURNAL OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE THIRTEENTH ANNUAL CONVENTION OF THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF EASTERN MICHIGAN

**St. John's Episcopal Church
Saginaw, Michigan**

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2007, 1:00 P.M. **FIRST BUSINESS SESSION**

On October 19, 2007, the day and place designated for the meeting of the Annual Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Eastern Michigan, The Rt. Rev. Todd Ousley called the Convention to order following Noonday Prayers.

Bishop Ousley called upon The Very Rev. Elsa Pressentin, Dean of the Saginaw Valley Convocation, and Charles Leibrand, President of Saginaw Valley Convocation to welcome the Convention.

Bishop Ousley explained that we are gathered together because the Canons say we must, but more importantly to renew relationships, share in Christian fellowship with one another, and to share our hopes and dreams of ministry.

ELECTION OF SECRETARY

Bishop Ousley introduced Ms. Barb Meikle, St. Jude's, Fenton, and asked for a motion from the floor to elect her Secretary of Convention. Motion was moved, seconded, and passed.

INTRODUCTIONS

Bishop Ousley introduced the following people: Mr. Edward Henneke, Trinity, Flushing, Chancellor of the Diocese and The Rev. William McClure, St. James', Cheboygan, President of the Standing Committee.

QUORUM

A roll call of congregations was taken with the delegates standing as their congregation was called. Two congregations were not present – St. Luke's, Rogers City and St. John's, St. Johns. Bishop Ousley declared that a quorum was present.

RULES OF CONVENTION

The Chair noted the Rules of Convention had been included in the Delegate Packet. Bishop Ousley recommended adoption of the Rules and asked for a motion to that effect. Motion was moved, seconded, and passed. The complete list of Rules appears on page 2 in the Journal.

CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE

Bishop Ousley recognized Barb Meikle, Chair of the Credentials Committee. Ms. Meikle moved that "pursuant to Title 1, Canon 11, Section 3, forty-seven congregations of the Diocese of

Eastern Michigan have filed their parochial reports in a timely fashion and will have voice and vote of their lay delegates and clergy at this convention. Two other congregations filed their parochial reports very late, but have been appropriately forgiven by the Bishop according to our canonical provisions and with the approval of this convention, they too shall have voice and vote.” Motion was supported and passed.

Furthermore, one congregation has failed to submit its parochial report. Therefore, the delegation from St. John’s, St. Johns, is not eligible to vote at this convention. No further action is required by this convention.

ELECTION OF CHANCELLOR AND ASSISTANT CHANCELLOR

The Chair nominated Edward Henneke, Trinity, Flushing, as Chancellor and Eric Blackhurst, St. John’s, Midland, as Assistant Chancellor. Both were elected by motions moved, supported, and passed.

APPOINTMENTS

Bishop Ousley announced and welcomed the following Diocesan appointments:

The Rev. Sharon Naughton, Bishop’s appointment to the Commission on Ministry
Helen Johnston, Bishop’s appointment to the Commission on Ministry
The Rev. Anna Leigh Kubbe, Archdeacon

Bishop Ousley announced the following appointments to Camp Chickagami Board by Convocation Councils:

Emory Ames, St. Paul’s, Gladwin
John Pettipher, St. Jude’s, Fenton
Tom Ritter, Trinity, Alpena
Don Smith, St. John’s, Dryden

INTRODUCTIONS OF CANDIDATES

The candidates for election to the Standing Committee, Commission on Ministry, Ecclesiastical Court, General Convention Deputies and Trustees at this year’s Convention were asked to come forward at the request of the Chair and introduce themselves.

CLERGY CHANGES

Bishop Ousley announced the following clergy changes:

The Rev. Linda Crane, Vocational Deacon, Grace, Port Huron/All Saints’, Marysville
The Rev. Daniel Cannon, Priest-in-charge, Christ Church, East Tawas
The Rev. Andrew Downs, Transitional Deacon, St. David’s, East Lansing
The Rev. Sarah Fossati, Transitional Deacon, Missioner to Young Adults
The Rev. Nancy Steele, Transitional Deacon, Mutual Ministry Team, St. Paul’s, Corunna
The Rev. Mike Herman, Rector, Trinity, Bay City
The Rev. Mickie Pifer, Vocational Deacon, St. Elizabeth’s, Higgins Lake
The Rev. Joan Kemp, Vocational Deacon, St. Paul’s, Saginaw

SPECIAL ORDER OF BUSINESS

Bishop Ousley recognized the convention's keynote speaker, The Rev. Ann Hallisey, who spoke on "Continuing in the Apostles Teaching and Fellowship". The text of the address is found in the journal.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2007, 8:30 AM **SECOND BUSINESS SESSION**

The second business session opened with Morning Prayer.

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON CONSTITUTION AND CANONS

Bishop Ousley recognized The Rev. Charles Curtis, Interim Rector, Trinity, Flushing, and Chair of the Constitution and Canons Committee who presented the following amendments:

I. Submitted by the Standing Committee to delete the need to appoint each year a committee with no regular responsibility

Move to amend Title I, Canon 3, Sec. 5, as follows,

(a) CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE,....Sec. 2.

~~(b) COMMITTEE ON ADMISSION OF NEW CONGREGATIONS, consisting of two ordained persons and two lay persons, responsible for recommending approval or rejection of congregations requesting union with the Convention in compliance with canons. This committee may solicit support or advice from the Convocations as required.~~

(c) COMMITTEE ON CONSTITUTION.....

[Re-number further subsections (c) to (b); (d) to (c), etc.]

The motion was supported and passed.

II. Submitted by the General Convention Deputation to change the appointment procedure and make-up of the Provincial Synod Deputation, reflecting the changed nature of the Provincial Synod

To amend Title I, Canon 16 as follows,

CANON 16 Of Deputies to the Provincial Synod

~~The Annual Convention in the year 1995, and in every third year thereafter, shall elect one ordained person, presbyter or deacon, who is entitled to vote in such Convention, and one lay member, who is a communicant in good standing in some congregation of the Diocese, to act as Deputies from the Diocese to the Synod Council of the Fifth Province for terms of three years. Such Convention shall elect in the same Convention, as Alternate Deputies, one ordained person, presbyter or deacon, and one lay member having the same qualifications as the other Deputies. In addition the Standing Committee shall appoint to Synod Council one of the General Convention lay Deputies. The Standing Committee shall also have the power to designate one or more other persons to fill any vacancy which may occur in the representation of the Diocese. Each person so designated by the Standing Committee shall have all the rights of a Deputy duly elected. It shall be the duty of the Deputies-elect to signify to the President of the Standing Committee, at least sixty (60) days before each annual meeting of the Synod~~

~~Council whether, or not, they will attend to the duties of their office.~~

The Standing Committee shall appoint from among the current General Convention Deputies and Alternate Deputies, in as equal numbers Lay and Clerical as may be practicable, such Deputies as may, from time to time, be needed to represent the Diocese at the Synod Council of the Fifth Province.

The Rev. Elizabeth Morris Downie proposed an amendment to this resolution. She noted that the General Convention deputation did not propose this resolution. The amendment proposed striking the first five words and replacing them with the following:

“In the year preceding a meeting of the General Convention, the Convention of this diocese shall elect”

The amendment was supported, seconded, and passed. The complete amendment now reads:

In the year preceding a meeting of the General Convention, the Convention of this diocese shall elect from among the current General Convention Deputies and Alternate Deputies, in as equal numbers Lay and Clerical as may be practicable, such Deputies as may, from time to time, be needed to represent the Diocese at the Synod Council of the Fifth Province.

III. Submitted by the Committee to conform Diocesan Canon references to the appropriate Canon of the General Convention

A. The following references are unchanged, save the addition of the canonical title

DEM Canon Canons of General Convention reference

I.7.6	I.8 (<i>Of the Church Pension Fund</i>)
I.7.11	I.12.1 (<i>Of Standing Committees: Meetings</i>)
I.11.2	I.6 (<i>Of the Mode of Securing an Accurate View of the State of this Church</i>)
I.12.1	I.7 (<i>Of Business Methods in Church Affairs</i>)
I.12.2	I.7 (<i>Of Business Methods in Church Affairs</i>)
I.14.1	I.8 (<i>Of The Church Pension Fund</i>)
I.17.3(e)	I.7 (<i>Of Business Methods in Church Affairs</i>)
I.25.2	I.16 (<i>Of Clergy and Congregations Seeking Affiliation with This Church</i>)
I.26	I.17 (<i>Of Regulations Respecting the Laity</i>), 18 (<i>Of the Solemnization of Holy Matrimony</i>), and 19 (<i>Of Regulations Respecting Holy Matrimony...</i>)
II.1	II (<i>Worship</i>)
IV.2.2. (c).1	IV.4.8 (<i>Of Diocesan Courts, Diocesan Courts...: System of Challenge</i>)
IV.2.2. (c).2	IV.4.8 (<i>Of Diocesan Courts, Diocesan Courts...: System of Challenge</i>)

B. The following references are corrected, with the addition of the canonical title

DEM Canon Canons of General Convention reference

I.11.1	III.14.3; III.9.5(c) (<i>Of the Life and Work of Priests: Of Priests and their Duties</i>)
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- I.25.2 III. 10 (*Of Reception of Clergy from Other Churches*), ~~11, or 12~~
- III.4 III.9.3.a (*Of the Life and Work of Priests: Of the Appointment of Priests: Rectors*)
- III.5 III.14 9.12 (*Of the Life and Work of Priests: Reconciliation of Disagreements Affecting the Pastoral Relation*)
- III.6.1 III.15 9.13 (*Of the Life and Work of Priests: Dissolution of the Pastoral Relation*)
- III.6.2 III.15 9.14 and following (*Of the Life and Work of Priests: Notice to Ecclesiastical Authority*)
- III.6.3 (1st) III.15.6 9.18(a) (*Of the Life and Work of Priests: Failure or refusal to comply with judgment*)

C. The following needs to be redrafted to conform the Canon of the General Convention

DEM Canon Canons of General Convention reference

III.2.1 (a) needs to be rewritten to conform to III.2.2

Sec. 1. **Duties:** There shall be a Commission on Ministry whose duties shall be to:

(a) *Advise and assist the Bishop, as prescribed by the Title III, Canon 2, Section 2 (Of Commissions on Ministry) of the Canons of the General Convention.* ~~Episcopal Church;~~

- ~~i. to determine present and future needs for ministry in the Diocese;~~
- ~~ii. to recruit, select, guide, and examine aspirants, Postulants and Candidates, for Holy Orders;~~
- ~~iii. to provide for the guidance and pastoral care of Clergy and Lay Persons who are in stipendiary and non-stipendiary positions accountable to the Bishop;~~
- ~~iv. to promote the continuing education of Clergy and of Lay Professionals employed by the Church; and~~
- ~~v. to support the development, training, utilization and affirmation of the ministry of the Baptized in the world.~~

(b) The Commission shall...

D. The following was inadvertently omitted in the revision adopted in 2005 and needs to be restored with the corrected reference and title:

DEM Canon Canons of General Convention reference

III.3.1 ...called for that purpose *in accord with Title III, Canon 11 (Of the Election and Ordination of Bishops) of the Canons of the General Convention.*

EPISCOPAL YOUTH EVENT REPORT

Kris Forsyth, St. Christopher's, Grand Blanc, reported on the upcoming Episcopal Youth Event being held in San Antonio, Texas, in July 2008. Kris will be coordinating the delegation from Eastern Michigan. Young people from across the country come together to worship, experience workshops, forums, and a cultural carnival. She asked for congregations to assist by distributing information, providing application and financial support, praying, and supporting the young people when they return.

GENERAL CONVENTION RESOLUTIONS

Barb Meikle, Secretary to Convention, read the following Constitutional amendments as referred from the 75th General Convention:

A020: Amend Article I.2

*Resolved, that Article 1, Section 2, of the Constitution be amended as follows:
All Bishops of this Church, except any excluded by canon or under the Rules of the House, shall have seat and voice in the House of Bishops. Each Bishop of this Church having jurisdiction, Bishop Coadjutor, Bishop Suffragan, Assistant Bishop, and every bishop holding an office create by General Convention shall have a vote in the House of Bishops. A majority of all Bishops entitled to vote shall be necessary to constitute a quorum for transaction of business.*

And be it further

Resolved, That this amendment to Article 1, Section 2, shall take effect immediately upon passage.

A021: Amend Article VIII

Resolved, That the last paragraph of Article VIII of the Constitution be amended to read as follows:

A bishop may permit an ordained minister in good standing in a Church with which this Church is in full communion as specified by the Canons who has made the foregoing declaration, or a minister ordained in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America or its predecessor bodies who has made the promise of conformity required by that Church in place of the foregoing declaration to officiate on a temporary basis as an ordained minister of this church.

And be it further

Resolved, That a copy of this resolution shall be sent to the Secretary of the Convention of every Diocese to be made known to the Diocesan Convention at its next meeting, and be adopted by the General Convention at its next succeeding regular meeting.

WRITTEN REPORTS

Bishop Ousley asked the Convention to receive by title, the reports from the Standing Committee, Treasurers, Trustees, Commission on Ministry, Convocations, Anti-Racism Ministry, Breaking New Ground, Camp Chickagami, ECW/UTO, Partners in Global Mission Task Force, Ministries Resource Center, Registrar, and Sheridan Scholarship. A motion was moved, supported and passed. Reports are found in the Journal.

PARTNERS IN GLOBAL MISSION REPORT

The Rev. Heather Barta, Christ Church, Owosso, reported on the work of the Task Force. She reported that the Task Force has been working on redefining their role and has decided they would like to help people network, encourage people to do mission, and connect people with ongoing missions. Using the lens of the Millennium Development Goals, they wanted to focus on local, national, and global issues. It was noted that there is a mission trip to the Gulf Coast happening in February and a possible trip to South Dakota next summer.

APPOINTMENTS FOR CONVENTION

The Rev. William McClure, Jr. announced the following appointments to the next Diocesan Convention on behalf of Standing Committee: Barb Meikle to Credentials Committee; The Very

Rev. Martin Field, The Very Rev. Elsa Presentin, The Rev. Charles Curtis, Eldon Card, Linda Rathburn, David Wentworth to the Constitution and Canons Committee; The Very Rev. Martin Field, Jack Mills, Barb Meikle, Katharine Rose, Molly Girard to the Convention Planning Committee; The Rev. Mary Delaney, Charles Parker to the Resolutions Committee.

QUESTION AND ANSWER

Bishop Ousley took questions from the floor on the following topics: urban ministry, shared episcopacy, other Anglican expressions, Camp Chickagami, youth/children's ministry, and the sabbatical on discernment for Holy Orders.

ELECTION RESULTS

Frank Semerau, Trinity, Bay City, Chair of Elections presented the following report:

DEPUTIES TO GENERAL CONVENTION

Rev. Tom Downs	Mary Lou Creamer
Very Rev. Martin Field	Henry Mayer
Rev. Anna Leigh Kubbe	Carol Moggo
Rev. Phil Seitz	Michael Spencer

STANDING COMMITTEE

Jack Carlsen	Mary Lou Creamer
Grady Holmes	Carol Moggo

ECCLESIASTICAL COURT

Rev. Bill Boli	Virginia McNabb
Rev. Charles Curtis	Jack Thompson

TRUSTEES

Gary Grinn
Tom Ritter

COMMISSION ON MINISTRY

Marnie Bash
Stacy Walker-Frontjes

Bishop Ousley congratulated the newly elected. He thanked all those who had been nominated for making themselves available for service.

COURTESY RESOLUTIONS

The Chair recognized Mr. Charles Parker, Grace, Lapeer, who moved the adoption of the following Courtesy Resolutions:

1. WHEREAS, we have been reminded of the teaching of St. Teresa of Avila that "Christ has no body on earth but yours" and the congregation of **St. John's, Saginaw**, has taken this teaching to heart in receiving this gathering of the diocesan family,

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, that this 13th Annual Convention of the Diocese of Eastern Michigan does extend most grateful thanks to our hosts for the generous sharing of their facilities, their talents, and their labors to make this gathering welcome.

2. WHEREAS, we are more than just a collection of individual congregations, but are called to work together in grass-roots mission, and **the Saginaw Valley Convocation** has brought together the resources of many who make up the Body of Christ to support this gathering.

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, that this 13th Annual Convention of the Diocese of Eastern Michigan does offer thanks to the host convocation and prayers for its continuing ministries.

3. WHEREAS, the Body of Christ is larger than any single denomination, and **First Presbyterian Church of Saginaw** has so generously opened their doors to receive their Episcopal brothers and sisters,

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, that this 13th Annual Convention of the Diocese of Eastern Michigan does thank our brothers and sisters for providing a place to gather in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers.

4. WHEREAS, to facilitate this gathering, the congregations of **St. Bartholomew's, Mio, and St. Dunstan's, Davison**, have opened their doors to host pre-convention orientation meetings to allow delegates to familiarize themselves with the business to be considered,

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, that this 13th Annual Convention of the Diocese of Eastern Michigan does extend thanks to these congregations for offering their hospitality and their service as parts of the Body of Christ.

5. WHEREAS, our **diocesan staff and volunteers**, in addition to their regular responsibilities to the business of the diocesan center and to keeping our bishop on schedule, have contributed so extensively to the preparations for this gathering,

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, that this 13th Annual Convention of the Diocese of Eastern Michigan does extend grateful thanks to our dedicated staff and volunteers without whose efforts this gathering of the diocesan family would not be possible.

6. WHEREAS, **the Rev. Ann Hallisey** has joined us to share her teachings on the first part of our Baptismal Covenant to "continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers"

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, that this 13th Annual Convention of the Diocese of Eastern Michigan does thank her for the sharing of her gifts in challenging us and helping to expand our understanding of this fundamental part of our ministry and faith as Episcopalians.

7. WHEREAS, with the passing of **the Rt. Rev. James A. Kelsey** in June of this year the Episcopal Church has lost one truly blessed with the gifts of teaching and leadership, and our brothers and sisters of the Diocese of Northern Michigan have lost their apostle, and

WHEREAS, Bishop Kelsey brought to his ministry a deep and passionate commitment to the ministry of all the baptized, helping all of us, whether directly or indirectly, to more fully realize our true calling and find means of empowerment to carry out our role in the Lord's "eternal priesthood" and that this role is fully conferred through the sacrament of Baptism,

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, that this 13th Annual Convention of the Diocese of Eastern Michigan does offer continued prayers for the repose of the soul of Bishop Kelsey, secure in the knowledge that he is received into the loving embrace of the God he so ably proclaimed as one whose earthly work is done, and does offer prayers and compassion for Bishop Kelsey's family, the people of the Diocese of Northern Michigan, and all others who mourn his passing, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that as "Christ has no body on earth but yours" it is for us who have learned from Bishop Kelsey's teaching and who remain to carry on, to continue to spread still further the commitment to the ministry of all the baptized as indispensable parts of the Body of Christ that is the Church, and pray for the blessing of the Spirit to make each of us an instrument in this teaching, that this may become a living memorial to our brother in Christ.

The resolutions were supported and passed. A moment of silence was observed in honor of James Kelsey.

CLOSING

Bishop Ousley declared the convention business adjourned and announced that next year's convention would be hosted by Flint River Valley Convocation at St. Paul's, Flint, October 17-18, 2008. Holy Eucharist was celebrated following the close of business.

REFLECTION AT CONVENTION EVENSONG

The Right Reverend Todd Ousley

October 19, 2007

As we gather for the 13th Annual Convention of the Diocese of Eastern Michigan, we commemorate the life and witness of a 16th century nun, mystic, reformer, and first female Doctor of the Church, Teresa of Avila. Let us consider her words reaching across the centuries.

Christ has no body now but yours

No hands, no feet on earth but yours

*Yours are the eyes through which He looks
compassion on this world*

Christ has no body now on earth but yours.

Christ has no body now on earth but yours. Teresa's voice reminds us that God has entrusted us with the continuing ministry of Christ in our time and place and invited us into holy partnership for holy purposes. As Christ's Body, the Church, we are beginning today a 5-year exploration of how we will be faithful to the responsibilities given to us by God in our baptism. This year's exploration will focus on the first of five promises we make in baptism: *Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of the bread, and in the prayers?*

Earlier this afternoon, the Reverend Ann Hallisey led us in a time of creative consideration of what it means to continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship. We were given opportunities to share with one another our experiences of Church and our experiences in striving to live into our baptismal promises. Fundamental to our identity as Christians --- those baptized by water and the Spirit --- are the promises that we make in our baptism. Equally central to our self-understanding as the Diocese of Eastern Michigan is a deep commitment to baptismal ministry -- calling forth from all God's holy people a commitment to exercise our unique and particular gifts for ministry and service in the name of Christ.

In order for us to better focus our gifts for ministry in this diocese, you and I participated in a season of listening as we gathered in some 50 congregational meetings, 4 convocation council meetings and 4 clergy gatherings to hear your dreams for being Church --- bishop and people. The dreams that were heard have shaped our life together this past year and are giving shape to concrete manifestations of your hopes. You dreamed of a diocese that:

- **Communicates Clearly and Connects People and Resources** — you want accurate, clear, and concise information delivered on a timely basis about events and developments in congregations, the diocese, the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion.
- **Equips Leaders** — you asked the Diocesan Office to be the primary “instigator” for equipping leaders for service in the church, with support being given by convocations and congregations.
- **Practices Flexibility and Consistency** — you value a flexible bishop and staff that maintain consistent approaches to common concerns while taking into consideration unique local circumstances.
- **Emphasizes Stewardship** — you desire to deepen your understanding and your spiritual practices in all areas of stewardship: financial, gifts discernment, better use of available gifts, and creativity with “limited” resources.
- **Honors the Grassroots** — you long to maintain and grow the dream of a diocese that honors local determination of ministry initiatives while maintaining a connectedness to the whole.

- **Treasures its Anglican Heritage** — you are proud to be Anglicans and Episcopalians and want some assistance in learning how to articulate what it means to be “Anglican/Episcopalian.”

So how are we doing?

- **Communicating and Connecting**

A significant development this past year was the decision to transition from our intranet system, First-class, and to move toward a simpler, more accessible system for managing and providing vital ministry information. The first step has been taken with the elimination of the poorly functioning intranet system. Further steps are now underway to enhance the diocesan website with upgraded designs that will enable friendlier and timelier access to useful information. I am pleased to announce that Deb Petrie, Database Manager, will coordinate this project. Your continued patience and constructive input is appreciated.

In other communication developments, we have enhanced the visual appeal and accessibility of our weekly electronic communication, e-mich (formerly known as Tuesday’s Tickles), and we published a calendar of major events for the entire year, giving you significant advance notice of formation and gathering opportunities.

- **Equipping Leaders**

The Listening Tour made it abundantly clear that our prior diocesan commitments in congregational development needed to shift emphasis toward ministry development --- in other words, we need to concentrate on developing people who in turn develop ministry. In a few moments, I will describe structural and staff changes that are being made to accomplish this goal.

- **Practices Flexibility and Consistency**

Apparent inconsistencies in diocesan practices have led to suspicion and in some cases mistrust. In order to rebuild trust a concerted effort has been made to critically examine diocesan policies and procedures and to maintain consistency in application. Specifically, simplifications have been made in financial audit expectations and documentation for parochial reports; procedures for discernment for those seeking ordination is under revision while a sabbatical in accepting anyone into the process has been declared; in conversation with deacons, a review of the role of deacons in this diocese is underway and discussions with deacons and priests are yielding richer understandings about this distinct order of servant ministry; abundant grace has been present for congregations not meeting canonical reporting requirements, but 2008 promises to be a stricter time --- beginning with the 14th Annual Convention in 2008, congregations will be expected to meet all deadlines for parochial reports and audits in order to be seated with voice and vote at Diocesan Convention;

- **Emphasizes Stewardship**

Only the second stewardship conference in our history as a diocese was held this past spring and a number of follow-ups on that conference have occurred. A continued emphasis on equipping us to be more faithful stewards will mark our common life. Specifically, an annual stewardship conference is planned and a diocesan membership in The Episcopal Network for Stewardship is being arranged that will enable each congregation in the diocese to receive monthly updates on the latest in stewardship thinking around the church.

- **Treasures its Anglican Heritage**

I have been proud of your intent focus on mission and ministry in this diocese while maintaining an interest in developments within The Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion. Increasingly I hear you expressing your faith with confidence as an Anglican Christian, which gives me great joy. I am hopeful that the future will bring enhancements to our preparations for baptism, confirmation, reception, and reaffirmation, so that we may more fully form people as Christians who are clear about their unique Anglican heritage.

Let me turn now to a discussion of the structural and staff changes that will enable this diocese to take more seriously its dream of equipping all the baptized for ministry. For almost 18 months we have had no staff directly responsible on a full-time basis for equipping the baptized for ministry or working directly in congregational development. A number of individuals, staff and volunteer, have assisted in these areas, but no one has coordinated these functions. Earlier this year, the former position of Missioner for Congregational Development was re-shaped to focus more on development of individuals for ministry rather than a focus on development of systems and structure (or congregations). But, the position remained unfilled. By late June, a field of outstanding applicants from around the country was narrowed to three candidates invited to interview in person. The Convocation Deans, Dean of Mutual Ministry Support Team Formation, Diocesan Staff and I interview two of the three candidates in early July (the third candidate withdrew prior to being named a nominee for Bishop of Maine). However, a “perfect” match did not develop and it was back to the drawing board. When conversations about next steps in the search and interview process were resumed with the Mission Council (the 4 Convocation Deans, 4 Convocation Presidents, the Archdeacon, and the Dean for Mutual Ministry), we concluded that we no longer needed to search nationally, but that gifts we were looking for were already present in our midst. With this in mind, I am very pleased to announce that a flexible plan is in place to provide leadership resources to individuals and congregations with a plan that utilizes the unique gifts of individuals already a part of the diocesan ministry team. Rather than calling a full-time Assistant to the Bishop for Ministry Development, the following adaptation is being implemented between now and the first of 2008:

- Elsa Pressentin will become half-time Assistant to the Bishop for Ministry Development, while continuing as Dean and Regional Missioner for Saginaw Valley Convocation. In addition she will continue to serve as half-time rector of St. Paul’s in Bad Axe. To be negotiated is the timeline for cessation of duties as Priest-in-Charge for St. John the Baptist in Otter Lake which is approaching completion of their formation program as a Mutual Ministry Support Team congregation. Her focus in Ministry Development will be both to create new diocesan-wide programs for leadership formation and to bring existing leadership formation programs into alignment with the new emphases. I envision an imaginative and comprehensive program to equip congregational leaders for faithful and effective ministry at the local level and beyond.
- David Vickers will continue in his role as rector of Transfiguration Indian River and as Dean of Northern Convocation, his portfolio will now include a ministry as Assistant to the Bishop for Transitions. This work will include working with Mike Wilson, Diocesan Deployment Officer, and David’s continued work with Deacon Donna Kusky on FreshStart, an initiative designed to enhance both individual and congregational wellness as the critical times of clergy transitions.

- Glenn Stone, rector of St. Paul's in St. Clair will continue as Dean of Blue Water Convocation, but will be exercising his considerable gifts in pastoral care in a new initiative --- Clergy Community Pastoral Care. His work will include assisting me in providing pastoral care to clergy and their spouses, partners, and family as well as eventually assuming a role in pastoral care to surviving clergy spouses and partners.
- Although more discussions are required to clarify the role, the Assistant to the Bishop for Congregational Life will be undertaken by Marty Field, Rector of St. Paul's in Flint and Dean of the Flint River Valley Convocation. Marty has already proven himself to be an invaluable resource to me and to you in his attention to detail, his enthusiasm and expertise in congregational development matters and his wise words of counsel to me on challenging administrative matters.
- Finally, the appointment of Anna Leigh Kubbe as Archdeacon, with an "in-process" re-definition of the role of archdeacon, means that the diocese will have both an articulate champion for diaconal ministries and a trained and gifted specialist in congregational conflict transformation. Anna Leigh has already begun this ministry and has already proven herself to be a worthy successor to Sherry Young, who faithfully served both Bishop Leidel and me as Archdeacon.

Furthermore, all these structural changes based on gift-oriented ministry will cost us only slightly more than half what it cost to have a full-time Missioner for Congregational Development, simply by thinking creatively and inviting and empowering people to share their God-given gifts for ministry. Many thanks must go to the Deans, the Archdeacon and the Diocesan Staff for working creatively to help develop this plan.

Life in the Diocese is not just about us, however. You'll hear tomorrow from the Global Mission Task Force about possible new initiatives at the local, national and international level and about our deepening commitment to reach out for ministry partnerships. Also, tomorrow you will have an opportunity prior to our celebration of Holy Eucharist to engage me in conversation about any matters that are on your heart and minds, but I am especially interested in hearing your thoughts and/or questions on matters related to the state of The Episcopal Church and the worldwide Anglican Communion.

It has been a joy to serve among you these past 6 years and a distinct honor and humbling privilege to have served this past year as your bishop. May God abundantly bless us as we continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers.

SERMON FOR THE 13TH ANNUAL CONVENTION EUCHARIST

The Right Reverend Todd Ousley

October 20, 2007

ACTS 15:12-22a

Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and in the prayers? And what precisely might the apostles' teaching be?

And so, with this question on the hearts and minds of the leaders of the Church headquartered in Jerusalem, Paul and Barnabas are appearing before the Council of Jerusalem. The Acts of the Apostles has just concluded its account of the first stages of the gentile mission. Joy and peace have marked the tale, but the story is broken with "no small dissension and debate" over the issue of whether gentile converts should be circumcised and become Jews before they could be Christians. My, how history so predictably repeats itself.

No small dissension and debate. If we were to re-cast this remarkable tale within the context of 21st century Anglicanism, we would no doubt find ourselves hearing a story about declarations of orthodoxy and heresy. We'd undoubtedly experience name-calling with such labels as re-appraisers and re-asserters, liberals and conservatives. And the rhetoric just might be less than charitable on all sides of the debate. It might be amusing to act as casting director and determine who might star in such a 21st century film production. Would the Council of Jerusalem be the General Convention? The Joint Standing Committee of the Primates and the Anglican Consultative Council? The Primates' Meeting alone? The Anglican Consultative Council alone? After all, they are the only body within Anglicanism with any legislative authority for the Communion. Let's not overlook the possibility of the Lambeth Conference for surely all the bishops from around the world would like to audition for the part. But, alas, productions costs would be too high to include actors from such far-flung places, so perhaps we should just remember that this is an AMERICAN production after all. The General Convention will have to suffice but to keep costs down we'd surely film in Toronto. I wonder, should Oliver Stone or Michael Moore direct? And we probably shouldn't overlook the tragic and comic possibilities --- perhaps Woody Allen would be interested.

But, if we did exercise creative license and tackle this project, would we get it right? Is it really a tale with such clarity about which labels to attach? About who are the good guys and who are the bad guys?

It is all too easy to read those adversaries of Paul as conservative reactionaries and to see Paul and Barnabas as good, open progressives. Even Paul himself labeled these opponents as "false brothers" (Galatians 2:4). But is that fair? We must go deeper and consider their motivations. None of them object to preaching to gentiles. They know that the covenant with Israel includes blessing to all the families of the earth, but they also know that the sign of that covenant and blessing is circumcision, a sign in which Jesus himself participated in. So, it is reasonable to have a bit of difficulty wrapping one's mind around the notion that without circumcision, a person could participate in the blessings promised to the covenant people. Please note that the concern is not over exclusion (by race, nationality, or some other factor), but rather about covenant inclusion. Both Paul and Barnabas and the leaders in Jerusalem shared a common concern and desire: inclusion of all in the covenant with Israel. They simply and profoundly were in disagreement about how this might be accomplished. And, thus the first canonical debates in the Church began.

I imagine that the debates were preceded by indignation: How dare Paul, Barnabas, and the church at Antioch be so arrogant as to take it upon themselves to set aside the sacred demand of adherence to Torah? How else would a Jew remain a Jew? And so, there arises a dispute about innovation, about new twists in applying the gospel in unexpected situations to contemporary challenges. Paul and Barnabas did what we must do --- touch base with

apostolic authority for counsel. They ask themselves the question: HOW will we continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship? Particularly, how will we break bread in ways, with people, we had not expected?

We could focus our attention today on the contemporary applications of the "Antioch issue" to our situation in the worldwide Anglican Communion. We could focus a bit more narrowly on struggles closer to home --- those within The Episcopal Church. Appropriate attention must be given to concerns about Communion, but I'd like to turn our attention even closer to home --- the Diocese of Eastern Michigan.

We have experienced relative calm and an amazing spirit of collaboration over the past few years. Following the General Convention of 2003 with increased attention focused on our understanding of the very nature of the Church --- expressed through sometimes contentious discussions of human sexuality --- we did experience some painful losses of people and mission focus. We still have concerns and we still are not of one mind on all matters regarding the place of all God's children within the life and leadership of the Church . . . and we are unlikely to be of one mind ever. But we can live faithfully together in the midst of our differences. We can find Anglican unity within our diversity. I want us to continue to find ways to engage our concerns, our hopes, and our dreams in constructive and faithful ways. And I do not want us to avoid discussing potentially divisive and complex issues. These concerns will not go away and so we must enter into communion with one another in the deepest sense so that we may be a more whole and holy people of God.

I believe that we have before us a deeper and more profound concern that challenges our most cherished understandings of what it means to be Church and how we organize ourselves to be Church. We have an issue that will challenge us both to continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship and to continue to be innovative in our ways of being Church. I speak of the challenges in providing pastoral leadership in creative ways, particularly in small congregations and in congregations serving marginalized populations. As a diocese, we may be young and we may be small, but we are recognized as a pioneer and leader in exploring the frontier and boundaries of pastoral leadership provision. We have taken steps over the past 13 years to deepen our commitment to ministry of all the baptized, most concretely in the development of Mutual Ministry Support Teams, local teams of ordained and unordained who work collaboratively to provide leadership and support to the shared ministry of a congregation. As our economy continues to struggle, our congregations continue to age, and clergy availability decreases, we must continue to "think outside the box" and push the boundaries of our understandings of Church.

James, brother of our Lord Jesus Christ and leader of the Church in Jerusalem, spoke for the Council assembled when he determined that new and innovative ways of being Church, as proposed by Paul and Barnabas, could be blessed by the apostolic assembly, that change could occur and still maintain faithfulness to the apostles' teaching. I look forward to our journey together, our shared explorations of the boundaries and frontiers, and our testing innovations while continuing in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and in the prayers.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

The Reverend Ann Hallisey
October 19, 2007

Continuing in the Apostles' Teaching and Fellowship, in the Breaking of Bread and in the Prayers

Introduction – to Live What We Believe

Last May my husband and I were part of an interfaith trip to Turkey. We were guests of a moderate Muslim group – Global Cultural Connections Foundation. They are interested in creating “islands of peace” in the world through education, inter-faith dialogue, communication and respect. This group are followers of the contemporary Islamic philosopher, scholar, and writer, Fethullah Gulen. In the course of our travels we met representatives of this movement throughout Turkey who have started schools, universities, television stations, and newspapers. One particularly inspiring presentation came from the President of the Journalist and Writers Foundation. He talked about the need to live life intentionally and with purpose. And he said that commitment to principles of tolerance and respect is desperately needed in the world today not merely as ideals but imaged in the daily life of committed believers. Describing the philosophy of Mr. Gulen as formational for his life as a faithful Muslim, at one point the speaker said, “if you don’t live what you believe then you will end up believing what you live.” “If you don’t live what you believe then you will end up believing what you live” – words of wisdom from a stranger, a religious “other,” and yet compelling for Christians desiring to live life facing forward into their baptismal covenant.

As I understand it, this diocese will spend the program time of your next five conventions parsing the meaning, and more importantly, the *application* of the five promises we make and renew, each time a new Christian is welcomed into our fellowship. Our 1979 Prayerbook has set forth the sacrament of baptism in high relief, calling our attention to the Rite of Initiation and the vows we make there, in a continuous attempt to form our hearts for faith. Now, I don’t know if this happens to you, but as a priest for nearly 25 years, I’ve had enough conversations with parishioners and seekers that indicate to me that people don’t quite get this. Most of us have a hard time figuring out how to connect *what* we believe with *how* we live. So I would like our reflections today to focus on this challenge: how do we, in fact, learn to live what we believe?

I’m sure you’ve seen some of those news stories that talk about how Americans poll on religion and how they answer questions about their faith: do you believe in God, how often do you pray, how often do you go to church, how does your faith affect your life, etc. etc. There are all kinds of ways to finagle the statistics and some sociologists of religion think Americans lie about how often they go to church. Seems like an odd kind of thing to lie about. Are they thinking that maybe God won’t notice, or maybe he’s going to zap them if they speak the truth about what they really don’t believe?

Apart from the reliability of the statistics, it is safe to say that there is a spiritual hunger and longing among Americans today. But, here’s the interesting thing, people are not necessarily turning to the churches to assuage this spiritual hunger. I’d like to suggest that this is both a leadership concern and a spiritual challenge. It is a leadership issue to adequately interpret the spiritual longing and to shape a vision and mission appropriate to local context and need. It is a spiritual challenge to draw upon the richness of the Christian spiritual tradition for grounded responses to this collective longing, to be guided by the wisdom of the past and apply it to contemporary need *in new old ways*.

We have all heard people say, “I’m not religious but I am spiritual.” What does this mean for the individual? What does it say about spirituality in American culture today? What

challenges does it present to congregations and dioceses, to their mission, vocation and identity, as loci of response to such a need? What sort of leadership is required to discern such need and develop viable responses to it, within the congregational context?

Why are people not turning to the churches in the contemporary spiritual questing? What seems to be the problem that we who possess the richest insights and practices for deepening spirituality and growing in relationship to the Divine somehow are not doing a very good job of feeding those who hunger for these things? Reggie McNeal, author of *The Present Future: Six Tough Questions for the Church* argues that “the current church culture in North America is on life support. It is living off the work, money, and energy of previous generations from a previous world order.”¹ He notes that in younger generations than most of us sitting here today, fewer attend church – 52% of those born before 1946 attend church but only 36% of gen Xers do so. The unchurched population grew from 24% to 34% in the decade between 1992 and 2002. His diagnosis of the declining state of the church is based on the observation that we keep doing church for church people. Church energies are spent for members of the “club,” he says, not for those outside the church drawn toward God (even if they don’t know that it is God who is the source of their longing) and to be part of an authentic community. We church folks, especially we professional church folks are held captive by a custodial mentality rather than being on fire with a missional purpose. We keep forgetting that the church exists, not for those of us who are its members, but for those who are not yet a part of it. Just to remind my parishioners of this, when I was rector of a church, I put a big sign over the inside of the main doors of the church so that everyone who was leaving the building could read it. The sign said “You are now entering the mission field!”

Now, sometimes when I hear people talk like this I start to get antsy and feeling guilty, like I should be doing something that I’m not and that makes me a bad Christian, somehow. The truth of the matter is, we’re all simply unfinished Christians who will be freed at the day of our death to finish growing into the perfect being who was in God’s mind when God created us. So guilt and judgment is not, in any way, my intent in raising these things. I’m saying that there is a whole world out there famished for what we confess to believe every time we baptize a new Christian into our common life. And here’s a secret: we hunger for it too. We long for an authentic, vibrant, powerful connection to God. We desire to be part of a community who will help us grow God-ward, a community where we can share our questions and our uncertainties, and where we can practice the steps toward deeper encounter with the One who holds our deepest self.

The promises we make in the baptismal covenant are a great place to begin pondering these concerns and it is my task to reflect with you today about “continuing in the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of the bread and in the prayers.” When considering this promise the first thing to notice is the word “continuing.” It suggests that what was begun in baptismal preparation is just that – a beginning – the beginning of a journey into God’s life for us in and through salvation by Jesus Christ. In the verse from the Acts of the Apostles that forms the basis of this first baptismal vow that we are exploring, the Greek word for “continuing” translates more like “continuing steadfastly.” So that it means not just aimlessly moving along but rather doing so with a definite purpose. “Continuing” means that we are always on the way until we die. Just like Dorothy in the *Wizard of Oz*, once we step on that yellow brick road through baptism, we continue on the journey the whole of our life until we reach the City of Oz (which has always sounded in my ear like St. Augustine’s City of God.) So we are continuing, continuing steadfastly, continuing on the journey. Our life is a perpetual departure in the clear morning of springtime. It is always springtime for God, always morning. The apostles are always young and the continuing is always a beginning.

¹ McNeal, Reggie *The Present Future: Six Tough Questions for the Church* (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 2003) 1.

Understanding Practices

When we look at the first baptismal promise, we find four “practices” if you will, of Christian discipleship – (#1) the apostles’ teaching, (#2) the apostles’ fellowship, (#3) the breaking of bread, and the (#4) prayers. I’m very attracted to this notion of practices and in thinking about it have drawn on the work of Miroslav Volf and Dorothy Bass. Volf and Bass argue that the concept of practices, drawn from the humanities and social sciences, offer Christians a way of connecting the dots between what we believe and how we live. They define Christian practices as “patterns of cooperative human activity in and through which life together takes shape over time and in response to and in the light of God as known in Jesus Christ.”² Another way of saying this is that practices are “*things Christian people do together over time to address fundamental human needs in response to and in the light of God’s active presence for the life of the world.*”³

Furthermore, by looking at Christian practices, the authors maintain that such endeavor invites “theological reflection on the ordinary, concrete activities of actual people (you and me) – and also on the knowledge of God that shapes, infuses and arises from these activities” toward the goal of building community and shared meaning.⁴ The practices of teaching, fellowship, celebrating Eucharist and prayer are ways of vivifying the faith we confess when baptized or renewing our baptismal vows. It’s like we integrating our statement of faith in the creed with an operationalized faith, with a demonstrated way of being in the world that witnesses to creation and redemption and God’s activity with humanity in concrete and visible ways in our lives. Then it becomes not just words we say – “I believe in God the Father...I believe in Jesus Christ his only Son...I believe in the Holy Spirit...” – it begins to *look* like something, it looks like the interior life, nurtured by and exemplified in the things we do and the way we are in the world. Because we have become, through baptism, Christ for the world.

The general formulation of our first baptismal promise comes from the Book of Acts, in the second chapter. There we find the story of the first Pentecost and the miraculous, powerful gift of the Holy Spirit to those first apostles and through them to the Church in every generation. You know the story. The disciples are gathered in fear, waiting for someone to tell them what to do following Jesus ascension into heaven. “When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages as the Spirit gave them ability.” The story goes on to say that a crowd gathered to see what was going on and heard the disciples speaking each in their own native language. Then Peter gets up on a chair and starts preaching to the crowd. It was a powerful sermon, rehearsing all that God had accomplished in the life and death and resurrection of Jesus. Everyone who heard him was “cut to the heart.” Those who got it about what Peter was saying “welcomed his message and were baptized.” And the last line of the story is verbatim, the first promise we all make and re-make every time there is a baptism in our

² Volf, Miroslav and Dorothy C. Bass eds. *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life*. Grand Rapids, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2002) 3.

³ Craig Dykstra and Dorothy C. Bass, “A Theological Understanding of Christian Practices,” in *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life*. ed. Miroslav Volf and Dorothy C. Bass (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2002), 18.

⁴ Volf and Bass, 3.

community. “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.” (Acts 2:42)

Volf and Bass identify four characteristics of practices and I would argue that these are clearly, characteristics of the four practices in the first baptismal promise. Volf and Bass say that first, practices resist the separation of thinking from acting, and thus of Christian doctrine from Christian life.⁵ Another way of saying this is that practices come from the whole self, that they are not characterized by compartmentalization but rather by integration – of mind and heart and soul and action. This is so much richer than head stuff, alone. And the more we are cognizant of such integration, I think the more we will be attractive to those outside the church. We can no longer operate from the “if we build it, they will come” style of evangelism, says Reggie McNeal. The truth of the matter is, Christianity is no longer mainstream in much of the culture, yet people are still hungry for deeper connection to the divine but don’t know how to go about building a relationship to God. And, they are not walking through our church doors in droves, are they? What did Peter do at Pentecost? He went outside. He went outside and discerned the crowd’s curiosity and longing, and he talked to them about Jesus. That’s what we Episcopalians have to do. We have to go outside our church buildings, discern the longing of our neighbors’ hearts and talk to them about Jesus. If the notion of that makes you cringe, then you might want to investigate how your beliefs might become more integrated into the whole of your being.

A second characteristic of practices is that they “are social, belonging to groups of people across generations.”⁶ When Peter was talking to the crowds at Pentecost he told them that the promise of baptism – the gift of the Holy Spirit and their salvation through Jesus Christ – “the promise is for you, for your children and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls.” (Acts 2:39) The practices of our faith are learned in community, as Christians we are formed in community. That’s why when someone tells me they are a Christian but they don’t have to go to church because they meet God in nature, or whatever, I will argue that they are not practicing Christian. Because, news flash; Christianity is a team sport. One needs to be part of a community of faith to engage the practices of faith, to be formed as a Christian and to continue to grow into the full stature of Christ.

Third, “practices are rooted in the past but are also constantly adapting to changing circumstances, including new cultural settings.”⁷ Practices keep us alive, on our toes as well as grounded on the earth, moving forward into God’s future that is coming at us, as well as rooted in our history where God has revealed God’s self to all those who have gone before us. Practices are both anchor and kite for us as we try to negotiate our Christian life lived in the world at hand. They help us articulate who we are and remind us over and again, whose we are. When Peter spoke to the crowd on that first Pentecost, where did he start his sermon? He started with their collective past, with the story of the faith that they knew, with the prophet Joel and the promised outpouring of the Spirit in the last days, when the young would see visions and the old would dream dreams. Then he told them about God’s activity in Jesus. So his message was grounded in the past. But, here’s the important thing, the Spirit enabled him to speak in the language and cultural context of his listeners, so he was able to communicate to them about the *new* thing that God was doing.

The fourth characteristic of practices, according to Volf and Bass is that “practices articulate wisdom that is in the keeping of practitioners who do not think of themselves as theologians.” Do you think of yourself as a theologian? Most of us do not. Yet through family and relationship interaction, struggles with ethical behavior at work, in school or business,

⁵ Volf and Bass, 6.

⁶ Volf and Bass, 6.

⁷ Volf and Bass, 6.

hospital, congregations and dinner tables we participate as integrated Christian human beings. We aren't Christians just on Sunday, though that may be the time we most think about our faith. We are mothers and fathers and students and children, pastors and office workers, doctors and sanitation workers, gardeners and heater repair people, and a thousand different other things, and we are these things as Christians, continually pondering how to connect the dots from Sunday through the week. *Practices are the lines between the dots.* You might be surprised to know that thinking about how our beliefs and our lives are integrated, striving to live what we believe, we are engaged in the practice of doing theology.

Now that we know that the source of our baptismal promises are as ancient as the beginnings of the church, and as contemporary as tomorrow, let's consider the four practices embedded in the baptismal vow that frames the theme of this convention and see if we can discover what these practices look like in our lives today.

The Apostles' Teaching

First, there is the charge to continue in the apostles' teaching. Now, what is that? What does that mean, the apostles' teaching? I think it means the process through which we are being formed as Christians. It is both content and method, if you will. The apostles' teaching shows us what to *believe* as Christians and what to *do* – how to treat others, how to be a self, how to care for God's creation, how to be a community, how to be in relationship with the Lover of our Souls.

In the baptismal service, after the candidate has been baptized with water and the Trinitarian blessing, the celebrant, according to the rubrics, stands "in the full sight of the congregation," and prays for God to give the newly baptized "an inquiring and discerning heart, the courage to will and to persevere, a spirit to know and to love you, and the gift of wonder in all your works." It is a wonderful prayer that has within it all the hallmarks of the apostles' teaching. And when I am baptizing an infant (if they aren't screeching) it is very sweet to look into a baby's eyes and ask this of God for this child. When I'm baptizing a teen or an adult (generally they are NOT screeching) there is such a sense of freshness imparted in this prayer, of beginning again – "returning to the place we have started from and knowing it again for the first time," as T.S. Eliott says in his poem, *Little Gidding*. I like to think of this prayer as a spiritual version of the baptismal garment, enfolding the newly baptized into the protection and guidance their soul will need, as they walk faithfully along their Christian journey.

Practically speaking, what does "continuing in the apostles' teaching" look like? It means that we never stop growing in our knowledge of and relationship to God. I think that too often our faith formation looks like a matter of arrested development. In school we begin with basic elements of how to read and write and do simple computation. As we are educated our thought processes become more complex. We learn abstract ideas and intricate connections. We mature in our relationships. We figure out how to apply what we learn to the job of growing up. However, it seems that our faith formation sometimes grinds to a halt after the basic elements phase. Too often we remain in spiritual First Grade, even as we become competent adults with multifaceted lives in the world. To be engaged in apostolic teaching and formation means we are life-long learners about our faith, reading, talking, thinking about what we believe and maturing into deeper relationship with Christ and one another. It is not just a head thing. There are lots of well-educated clergy and even theologians who reside in spiritual First Grade. Possessing an inquiring and discerning heart, is to be open to the movement of the Holy Spirit who challenges us, stretches us, sometimes yanks us forward into ever more profound intimacy with God.

Engage First Dialogue

The Apostles' Fellowship

Now we turn to some reflections about the “apostles’ fellowship. This practice is all about community and, I believe, also about hospitality, governance and leadership, all of which are constitutive elements of community. Looking at the pattern of community that formed around Jesus, and then in the earliest Christian communities, we find models of belonging that are non-hierarchical; servant bodies, with leadership that sets the prevailing cultural norm upon its ear. Particularly the communities founded by Paul were like horizontal networks linked to one another through various hubs, all those places he wrote letters to, a new humanity, as Paul named them, transcending all the barriers that previously divided, and charting “a still more excellent way.” (I Cor. 12:31)

It is in the context of community that we are received in baptism and as noted in our discussion of the apostles teaching, it is in community that we are formed in and grow on our Christian journey. The Church, then, is first and foremost a community of practice.

I said a moment ago that the practice of the apostles’ teaching includes the practice of hospitality. The expectation is that God’s people will welcome strangers and treat them with justice. Though the practice of hospitality is grounded in very old, pragmatic necessities for survival in a desert culture it continues to be essential for life together today. We live in a different sort of desert in our fast-paced, global culture, a desert not made of sand and rock but of fear of the other and the hunger for authentic relationship. The impulse to hospitality as a spiritual practice is grounded in our awareness of God’s hospitality to us. The Christian tradition urges us to seek the face of God in the face of the stranger. For this reason, we offer hospitality because our guest may turn out to be the very Holy One we seek. One of my favorite scripture passages about hospitality draws upon the Genesis story of Abraham entertaining visitors/angels/messengers of God who came to his tent as he was encamped under the oaks of Mamre. In return for Abraham’s hospitality the guests offered their own gift in return, the news that in her old age Sarah would bear Abraham’s son Isaac. In the New Testament, The Letter to the Hebrews draws upon the memory of this story and instructs the Christian community to let mutual love continue and “not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing so some have entertained angels unawares.”

If we want to know what this practice of continuing in the apostles’ fellowship looks like in concrete terms, we need only to emulate the practice of Jesus. In the 25th chapter of the Gospel of Matthew Jesus is teaching about last things and he tells the following story: “Then the king (meaning Jesus in his role of Judge at the end of time) will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’ And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters you did it to me.’”

Social ethicist Larry Rasmussen, at Union Seminary in New York City, describes early Christian communities and their governance by borrowing the phrase “creative deviance on the front line” from Ron Heifetz, founder of the Center for Public Leadership at Harvard. Rasmussen says that Christian community in its leadership “...is *deviant* because it does not accept standard forms of ordering life as normative, even when they are dominant. (I think by this he means hierarchy.) It is *creative* because it seeks a positive alternative form. It is *on the front line* because it lives in the tension between our own time...and another yet to come.... Such a style depends on shared leadership, high levels of member participation, the capacity of its

organizers and troublemakers to see through the dominant ways of doing things, and a collective ability to offer alternatives.”⁸

As your diocese proceeds along in its discernment of shared ministry or total ministry, I would hold up to you that you are engaged in some of the best practices of Christian community and leadership marked by creative deviance on the front line. You are already engaged in the discernment of this practice, as you discern a call to be church in a new way – communities of ministry by and for all the baptized.

Engage Second Dialogue

The Breaking of Bread

Fellowship includes table fellowship and leads us to the third practice of the baptismal vow, the practice of breaking bread together. As Episcopalians we are a Eucharistic people. Breaking bread together is the central act of our worship. It is what forms us as a believing community and where we gather to *be* formed into believing community. In the breaking of bread the resurrected Jesus was revealed to the disciples on the road to Emmaus. In Holy Eucharist we gather to remember the saving acts of Jesus in such a way that He is present with us again. Eucharistic fellowship transcends time and place and finds the whole Communion of Saints gathered to celebrate Christ’s life among us. As a “foretaste of the heavenly banquet” it offers every participant an anticipatory glimpse into the future where God awaits.

When we think of what this looks like in practicality, we might ask ourselves questions like these: “Do our practices welcome all to the table? Are the discriminating distinctions drawn between people in society, considered of no account here (at Christ’s table), and how do we show that in the way we regulate our life together? Are the guests in turn called to be the hosts? Are means created and encouraged by which each participant can find gifts for meeting the hungers of the world? Are children as well as adults, and old as well as young, welcome participants? Does the organization of general community life – and not only the celebration of Eucharist – encourage leadership to emerge from the foot of the table? Do the ways in which we organize life together ask for participation that nurtures significant levels of personal commitment and responsibility, on a scale and in ways” appropriate to peoples’ gifts and abilities?⁹

I would also like to broaden the understanding of this practice of the breaking of bread to include all the sacraments as practices of the Christian life. To do so is a way of thinking outwardly from Eucharist toward the entirety of our Christian life together as sacramental practice. To have such a view of the sacramentality of all life, offers us a way to live what we believe. It is quite Benedictine, I suppose – finding the holy in the ordinary and by so doing, making the ordinary holy.

Engage Third Dialogue

The Prayers

Daily prayer was elemental to First Century Jewish religious practice, the religious practice that formed Jesus. Devout Jews prayed (still pray) three times a day and optimally, gathered in the synagogue in order to pray in community. Since the early Christians were Jews, this practice of regular daily prayer carried into the first Christian communities. As catechumens were prepared for Christian baptism they would have learned the creeds and prayers of the church as part of their formation. That practice continues today.

⁸ Larry Rasmussen, “Shaping Communities” in Dorothy C. Bass (ed.) *Practicing Our Faith*. 125.

⁹ Rasmussen, 131.

How do we define such prayer? According to the Catechism in the Book of Common Prayer “prayer is responding to God, by thought and by deeds, with or without words.” And Christian prayer is defined in a Trinitarian framework – to the Father, through Jesus Christ, and in the power of the Holy Spirit. (BCP, p. 856) Prayer is formative – praying shapes believing, we Anglicans like to say. We are also fond of describing ourselves as a Prayer Book people. By this we mean that as Anglicans we define ourselves through the prayers we say rather than through some confessional formula. You may have heard in an Inquirers or Confirmation class somewhere that if one wants to know what Anglicans believe, one should look at the Book of Common Prayer. One of the things we find there is the *Daily Office* and a daily lectionary or list of lessons that has us reading through the psalms three times in a year and through most of the bible once every two years.

However, I would hazard a guess that not many Episcopalians read the daily office, and I for one think this is a loss to the Christian community. The practice of continuing in the prayers is the most accessible one to engage. When we ask what this practice looks like it is pretty simple. It means regular times of the day that we set aside work or play and turn our attention Godward. For the act of hallowing the day, stopping our frenetic activity to connect with God is a way of ordering time according to God’s agenda and not our own. Maybe you don’t have the inclination to read Morning Prayer, Noonday Prayer, Evening Prayer and Compline every day. But Episcopal liturgy is so accommodating that we are given a minimalist approach to daily prayer in the section of the prayerbook entitled “Daily Devotions for Individuals and Families” beginning on page 136. These one page offices are a great way to *lean into* a habit of daily prayer, to begin practicing the presence of God so that God’s grace can begin to work on our souls, opening us to live all our life in the awareness of God’s companionship. Often when someone comes to me for spiritual direction, feeling a God-longing that summons them into deeper relationship, I will recommend the use of these daily devotions as a beginning practice of prayer. And so I commend it to you as a wonderful way to live into the practice of all your baptismal promises, and most particularly this practice of continuing in the prayers.

Engage Fourth Dialogue

Conclusion

With reflections that I’ve offered today and the appreciative conversations you have just now engaged in, as well as those (I trust) that you have been about in the past four weeks of the congregational study leading up to today, it is my hope that we have drawn forth some new energy about baptismal commitment in this diocese. I also hope that this notion of practices offers you some new perspective. Practicing our faith in baptismal communities is the core and ground of our Christian vocation – for we are formed in an apostolic and teaching community, shaped by Eucharistic worship and nurtured by daily prayer. None of us will be perfect in this. Just know that these practices offer us the road to perfection. Know this also, that through these practices we will come to live what we believe instead of being condemned to a vacuous life of believing what we live. And in so doing we might be witnesses to the world of God’s saving activity in Jesus Christ.

**CONGREGATIONS IN UNION with CONVENTION
of the DIOCESE OF EASTERN MICHIGAN
October 19 and 20, 2007**

<u>Place</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Congregation</u>	<u>Organized</u>	<u>Admitted</u>
Alma	Gratiot	St. John's	1885	1995
Alpena	Alpena	Trinity	1866	1995
Atlanta	Montmorency	St. Mark's	1960	1995
Bad Axe	Huron	St. Paul's	1881	1995
Bay City	Bay	St. Alban's	1965	1995
Bay City	Bay	Trinity	1854	1995
Bridgeport	Saginaw	St. Mark's	1962	1995
Cheboygan	Cheboygan	St. James'	1880	1995
Corunna	Shiawassee	St. Paul's	1865	1995
Davison	Genesee	St. Dunstan's	1953	1995
Dryden	Lapeer	St. John's	1902	1995
East Tawas	Iosco	Christ	1880	1995
Fenton	Genesee	St. Jude's	1860	1995
Flint	Genesee	Christ (inactive) **	1907	1995
Flint	Genesee	St. Andrew's	1915	1995
Flint	Genesee	St. Paul's	1839	1995
Flushing	Genesee	Trinity	1942	1995
Gaylord	Otsego	St. Andrew's	1954	1995
Gladwin	Gladwin	St. Paul's	1903	1995
Grand Blanc	Genesee	St. Christopher's	1941	1995
Grayling	Crawford	St. Francis'	1956	1995
Harrisville	Alcona	St. Andrew's-by-the-Lake	1956	1995
Harsens Island	St. Clair	St. Paul's	1926	1995
Higgins Lake	Roscommon	St. Elizabeth's	1959	1995
Hillman	Montmorency	Calvary	1884	1995
Indian River	Cheboygan	Transfiguration	1958	1995
Lapeer	Lapeer	Grace	1878	1995
Lexington	Sanilac	Trinity	1871	1995
Long Rapids	Alpena	Grace	1896	1995
Marine City	St. Clair	St. Mark's	1863	1995
Marysville	St. Clair	All Saints'	1953	1995
Midland	Midland	Holy Family	1957	1995
Midland	Midland	St. John's	1870	1995
Mio	Oscoda	St. Bartholomew's	1987	1995
Otter Lake	Lapeer	St. John's	1883	1995
Owosso	Shiawassee	Christ	1858	1995
Port Huron	St. Clair	Grace	1840	1995
Port Huron	St. Clair	St. Paul's	1873	1995

Congregations in Union with Convention, continued --

<u>Place</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Congregation</u>	<u>Organized</u>	<u>Admitted</u>
Rogers City	Presque Ile	St. Luke's	1942	1995
Rose City	Ogemaw	St. Andrew's	1948	1995
Saginaw	Saginaw	Calvary Memorial	1889	1995
Saginaw	Saginaw	St. John's	1851	1995
Saginaw	Saginaw	St. Matthew's	1954	1995
Saginaw	Saginaw	St. Paul's	1854	1995
St. Clair	St. Clair	St. Paul's	1848	1995
St. Johns	Clinton	St. John's	1864	1995
Sand Point	Huron	St. John's	1957	1995
Sandusky	Sanilac	St. John's	1903	1995
Standish	Arenac	Grace	1901	1995
West Branch	Ogemaw	Trinity	1901	1995

**Now known as Christ Enrichment Center