



***JOURNAL OF THE PROCEEDINGS***

***of the***

***FIFTEENTH ANNUAL CONVENTION***

***of the***

***EPISCOPAL CHURCH***

***DIOCESE OF EASTERN MICHIGAN***

***held in***

***PORT HURON, MICHIGAN***

***at***

***GRACE EPISCOPAL CHURCH***

***OCTOBER 23 and 24, 2009***

***Together with the Constitution and  
Canons of the Diocese  
Revised to Date***

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***Saginaw, Michigan***

**AGENDA - Fifteenth Annual Convention**  
Episcopal Diocese of Eastern Michigan - October 23 & 24, 2009  
Grace Church, Port Huron

**FRIDAY, OCTOBER 23, 2009**

- 11:00 a.m.    Registration (Hall)    **POLLS OPEN**
- 2:30 p.m.    First Business Session (Sanctuary)
- Prayers and Welcome
  - Convention Business - Rules, Roll call, Credentials, Clergy Changes, Appointments
  - Introduction of Candidates
- 3:30 p.m.    Special Order of Business (Keynote Address)
- 5:30 p.m.    Evening Prayer (Sanctuary)
- 6:00 p.m.    **POLLS CLOSE**
- 6:00 p.m.    Food & Fellowship (Hall)

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 24, 2009**

- 8:00 a.m.    Registration (Hall)
- 8:30 a.m.    Second Business Session (Sanctuary)
- Morning Devotions
  - Treasurer's Report
  - Bishop's Address
  - Excellence in Ministry Awards
  - Ministry Minute
  - Report of Constitution and Canons
  - Ministry Minute
  - Courtesy Resolutions

Close of Business

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

**GENERAL RULES**  
**Diocesan Annual Convention**  
**October 23-24, 2009**

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 FIFTEENTH ANNUAL CONVENTION OF THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF EASTERN MICHIGAN**

**Grace Episcopal Church  
Port Huron, Michigan**

## **FRIDAY, OCTOBER 23, 2009, 2:30 P.M. FIRST BUSINESS SESSION**

On October 23, 2009, the day and place designated for the meeting of the Annual Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Eastern Michigan, The Rt. Rev. Todd Ousley offered an opening prayer and called the Convention to order.

Bishop Ousley called upon The Very Rev. Glenn Stone, Dean of the Blue Water Convocation, and Mr. Dave Little, President of Blue Water Convocation to welcome the Convention.

Bishop Ousley explained that we are gathered together because the Canons say we must, but more importantly to gather as a family, a group of people who share mission and ministry, who collaborate with one another in working toward God's purposes in this part of the kingdom.

### **ELECTION OF SECRETARY**

Bishop Ousley introduced Mrs. 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 Mr. Grady Holmes, St. Paul's, Saginaw, President of the Standing Committee.

### **QUORUM**

A roll call of congregations was taken with the delegates standing as their congregation was called. Six congregations were not present – Calvary, Hillman, Transfiguration, Indian River, Grace, Long Rapids, Hope-St John's, Oscoda, 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 two 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, all fifty 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". Motion was supported and passed.

## **ELECTION OF CHANCELLOR AND ASSISTANT CHANCELLOR**

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

## **INTRODUCTIONS OF CANDIDATES**

The Chair introduced the candidates for election to the Standing Committee, Commission on Ministry, Ecclesiastical Court, and Trustees at this year's Convention.

## **ACCLAMATION OF CANDIDATES**

Since there were the exact number, or less than the exact number, of candidates nominated for the Standing Committee, Commission on Ministry, Ecclesiastical Court, and Trustees, the Chair asked for a motion to elect those nominated by acclamation. Motion was supported and passed.

The chair thanked those who were willing to let their names stand for nomination, and who have just been elected to serve in the coming year.

## **APPOINTMENT OF JUBILEE OFFICER**

The Chair announced the appointment of The Rev. Elizabeth Morris Downie as Jubilee Officer and Peace and Justice Missioner.

## **MINISTRY CHANGES**

Bishop Ousley announced the following ministry changes:

ROBERT DIEHL, Sacramentalist, St. Paul's, Port Huron  
JANE DIEHL, Deacon, St. Paul's, Port Huron  
PATRICIA KELLY, Administrator, St. Paul's, Port Huron  
DARLENE KING, St. Paul's, Port Huron  
SHIRLEY SEELY, Sacramentalist, St. Paul's, Port Huron  
ROBERT WILEY, Catechist, St. Paul's, Port Huron  
RUTHMARY WILEY, Catechist, St. Paul's, Port Huron  
CAROL WHITE, Administrator, St. Paul's, Port Huron  
NOREEN WRIGHT, Evangelist, St. Paul's, Port Huron  
DEBRA HEMINGWAY, Catechist, St. John's, Otter Lake  
MARY LOU LAFOND, Catechist, St. John's, Otter Lake  
ANN NORTON, Sacramentalist, St. John's, Otter Lake  
LARRY PARKS, Deacon, St. John's, Otter Lk.  
SARAH PARKS, Sacramentalist, St. John's, Otter Lake  
JOANNE ST. PIERRE, Deacon, St. John's, Otter Lake  
DOYLE STRATTON, Evangelist, St. John's, Otter Lake  
ERIKA STRATTION, Encourager, St. John's, Otter Lake  
DORIS SUTTON, Administrator, St. John's, Otter Lake

## **DOMINICAN REPUBLIC PRESENTATION**

Bishop Ousley shared photographs of his spring trip to the Dominican Republic in conjunction with the Dioceses of Michigan and Western Michigan. While in the country, there was an exploratory discussion to determine the possibility of a mission relationship.

## **RESOLUTIONS REPORT**

The Chair recognized Mr. Charles Parker, St. John's, Dryden, and Chair of the Resolutions

Committee. Mr. Parker moved the adoption of the following resolution presented by the Standing Committee.

**Resolved**, that the 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention of the Diocese of Eastern Michigan directs the Global Mission Task Force and The Rt. Rev. Todd Ousley on behalf of the diocese to develop a companion relationship with the Episcopal Diocese of the Dominican Republic in cooperation with the other dioceses of Lower Michigan.

The resolution was supported and passed.

## **SPECIAL ORDER OF BUSINESS**

Bishop Ousley introduced the convention keynote speaker, The Rev. Peter Rood, rector of Holy Nativity, Westchester, CA. The text of his address is included in this journal.

## **SATURDAY, OCTOBER 24, 2009, 8:30 AM** **SECOND BUSINESS SESSION**

The second business session opened with Morning Devotions.

### **REPEAT ROLL CALL**

Congregations not present at roll call yesterday were announced again. Transfiguration, Indian River was present.

### **TREASURER'S REPORT**

Robert Meikle, Diocesan Treasurer, gave a summary of the financial position of the diocese. 2008 was a successful year from a financial perspective with a net surplus \$ 28,700, which went directly to operating reserves. Tithing commitments from congregations averaged 9.0%. Due to prior year tithes received from congregations in 2008, convocations received an additional \$16,000. A drop in investment revenue is expected in 2010, due to investment losses, even though the market has begun to recover. A deficit of \$11,800 is projected for 2009, which included \$14,000 to reserves, so the year-end financial position is expected to break even. He stated that the Diocese is well positioned for the next three years, even though we may run deficits in later years.

### **BISHOP'S ADDRESS**

Bishop Ousley addressed the convention. Text included in this journal.

### **EXCELLENCE IN MINISTRY AWARDS**

Bishop Ousley presented Excellence in Ministry Awards to the following:

The Reverend Frank Davenport, in loving appreciation for dedicated service as Deacon serving Trinity, Bay City, most notably through your undying passion for the Food of Faith program.

Mr. Michael Spencer, in loving appreciation for dedicated service to the Diocese of Eastern Michigan through your role as liaison for the spiritual renewal program, Happening.

### **EAGLE BUTTE MISSION TRIP REPORT**

The Rev. Robert Trask, rector of Grace, Port Huron, shared some thoughts and photos from the mission trip to Eagle Butte, South Dakota, in June 2009. They will be returning in 2010 to continue the work started last year.

## REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON CONSTITUTION AND CANONS

Bishop Ousley recognized The Rev. Charles Curtis, Chair of the Constitution and Canons Committee who presented the following report:

The Committee on Constitution and Canons includes the following members: Mr. Eldon Card, The Rev Charles Curtis, The Very Rev. Martin Field, The Very Rev. Elsa Pressentin, Ms Linda Rathburn, Mr. David Wentworth, and Mr. Edward Henneke, Chancellor

### **I. Submitted by the Committee on Constitution and Canons to integrate fully the nominating process both by Committee and petition, to reset dates to allow for needed procedures, and to rearrange subsections to reflect the chronological events in the Election of a Bishop**

**To amend Title III, Canon 3, Sec. 2 as follows,**

(f) .....and clergy of the Convention not later than ~~ninety (90)~~ *one hundred (100)* days before the date set for the Electing Convention.

~~(d)(sic)~~ (g) Nominations may not be made..... to the President of the Standing Committee at least ~~seventy (70)~~ *seventy-five (75)* days before the date set .....

(h) [this is taken from subsection (l)] *If any person nominated by the Committee shall withdraw, the Committee may substitute the name of another person previously considered by the Committee and deemed qualified, and such a substitution shall constitute a nomination of the person so named. This may be done at any time up to seventy-five (75) days before the date set for the Electing Convention, on which the Committee's report shall be its Final Report and forwarded to the President of the Standing Committee said seventy-five (75) days before the date set for the Electing Convention.*

~~(e)(sic)~~ (i) Background and other checks.....

~~(j)~~ (j) The President of the Standing Committee.....the names of the ~~lawful~~ candidates *lawfully* nominated *by the Committee and* by petition, *signifying for each nominee whether that person was nominated by the Committee or by petition.*

~~(h)~~ (l) The Committee shall arrange with the Convocations *Presidents* for appropriate...

~~(j)~~ (k) The entire list of nominees.....

~~(j)~~ [the entire subsection is DELETED]

(m) *As the first order of business at the Electing Convention, the names of persons nominated by the Committee and* by petition shall be presented by the Secretary of the Convention in an order determined by lot. *This shall constitute a nomination of each person.* For each such nominee there shall be a ~~nominating speech of not more than ten minutes,~~ a seconding speech of not more than five minutes, and there may be one ~~only~~ further seconding speech of not more than three minutes.

The motion was supported and passed.

## **II. Submitted by Charles Bash to provide for a more easily obtained method to replace Trustees who resign before the end of their terms**

**Move to amend Title I, Canon 10, Sec. 2, as follows,**

Sec. 2. Each Convocation Council ... Each Annual Convention.... four-year terms. In the case of a vacancy, ~~each Convocation Council shall nominate to the Annual Convention or a Special Convention called for that purpose the Standing Committee, at least one person; and the Convention shall elect one of the persons so nominated~~ *the Standing Committee shall elect a person* to serve the remainder of the unexpired term. No Trustee...

The motion was supported and passed.

### **PEACE AND JUSTICE REPORT**

The Chair recognized The Rev. Elizabeth Morris Downie, Peace and Justice Missioner, for a report. She reminded the gathering that they are all peace and justice missioners, due to the part of baptismal covenant which asks if we will “strive for peace and justice”.

### **WRITTEN REPORTS**

Bishop Ousley asked the Convention to receive by title, the reports from the Standing Committee, Trustees, Commission on Ministry, Convocations, Camp Chickagami, Global Mission Task Force, Ministries Resource Center, Registrar, Retired Clergy and Spouses, Sheridan Scholarship, and Young Adult Ministry. A motion was moved, supported and passed. Reports are found in the Journal.

### **APPOINTMENTS FOR CONVENTION**

Mr. Grady Holmes, 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 Pressentin, The Rev. Charles Curtis, Eldon Card, Linda Rathburn, David Wentworth to the Constitution and Canons Committee; The Rev. Mary Delaney, Charles Parker to the Resolutions Committee.

### **COPPAGE-GORDON SCHOOL REPORT**

The Chair recognized The Very Rev. Elsa Pressentin, rector, St. Paul’s, Bad Axe, for an update on the Coppage-Gordon School for Ministry. In the future, this school will offer training in a number of areas. Two programs currently underway are the preaching practicum and the “Christians Who Are We?” program.

### **COURTESY RESOLUTIONS**

The Chair recognized Mr. Charles Parker, St. John’s, Dryden, who moved the adoption of the following special Courtesy Resolutions:

1. WHEREAS, **Grace Church, Port Huron**, which continues to be a beacon to its community, proclaiming the Good News by word and example, has again offered its generous support to our common mission and ministry by sharing its facilities, talent, and hospitality to make this gathering welcome,

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, that this 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention of the Diocese of Eastern Michigan does extend grateful thanks and appreciation to the host congregation for its generosity in providing a place to gather for our common business, worship, and fellowship.



2. WHEREAS, the **Blue Water Convocation**, an instrument for conducting common mission and ministry, has shared the resources of its congregations, and the gifts and talents of its members to host this gathering,

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, that this 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention of the Diocese of Eastern Michigan extends its deepest gratitude to the host convocation for its many contributions toward the work of our diocesan family.

3. WHEREAS, such a gathering of the diocesan family cannot take place without considerable preparation, and

WHEREAS, many of the most essential preparatory tasks and responsibilities have fallen to our **Diocesan Staff and Volunteers**,

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, that this 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention of the Diocese of Eastern Michigan does recognize and honor the considerable efforts of these dedicated souls to making this gathering possible.

4. WHEREAS, **the Rev. Peter Rood** has joined us to share his experiences with a congregation working to develop and share “radical hospitality” and to create a church with many doors, and

WHEREAS, he has challenged us to embrace the discomfort of God leading us to learn and do new things,

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, that this 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention of the Diocese of Eastern Michigan does thank him for this powerful sharing, and for the challenges contained within it.

5. WHEREAS, in embracing the work of the newly founded Coppage-Gordon School, the **Blue Water, Flint River Valley, Northern, and Saginaw Valley Convocations** have demonstrated by example our model of grass-roots leadership and cooperation for ministry,

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, that this 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention of the Diocese of Eastern Michigan does thank our Convocations for this generous support of on-going education which is part of the obligation of all of us as Christians to better be able to spread the Good News by word and example.

6. WHEREAS, the **Episcopal Diocese of Quincy** and the **Episcopal Diocese of Fort Worth** have spent much of the past year recovering from the mass defections of many of their brothers and sisters, in part over our latest rounds of questions and disagreements concerning human sexuality and who is fit to be called to roles of leadership in the Lord's Church, and

WHEREAS, the people of Quincy and Fort Worth who have rejected the choice of separation, in spite of the staggering challenges placed in front of them, have drawn together in their love and service of Christ to instead seize the opportunity to reform and rededicate The Episcopal Church in their areas, trusting in God's power to do far more through them than they could do on their own,

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, that this 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention of the Diocese of Eastern Michigan does offer its prayers, best wishes, and support to our Episcopal brothers and sisters of Quincy and Fort Worth for their example in taking on these challenges and opportunities, and for choosing to remain within The Episcopal Church to allow their voices from all sides of these issues to be heard, and to continue to proclaim the Good News by word and example to those of diverse views and in different places in their journey of faith.

Motion as supported and passed.

### **Resolution of Special Courtesy**

WHEREAS, in June of this year, our Bishop, **the Rt. Rev. Todd Ousley** discovered to his discomfort the cost of a willing spirit pushing a mortal body too hard, and

WHEREAS, to prevent a recurrence of this unfortunate event, he has been instructed to reduce his stress, and

WHEREAS, in our Baptismal Covenant we each accept the role of ministers of the Lord's Church, under our Bishop's apostolic leadership,

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, that this 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention of the Diocese of Eastern Michigan does pledge our love and support to our Bishop, and for ourselves and all Episcopalians of Eastern Michigan pledge to offer prayer and active support to our Bishop and each other to lighten the load on him as much as possible, so that we can continue to share our journey with him for as long as possible.

Motion was supported and passed.

### **SPECIAL COURTESY RESOLUTION**

The Chair recognized Mr. Brian Chace, President of the Northern Convocation to present the following special courtesy resolution:

WHEREAS, Mr. Charles Parker of the Episcopal Diocese of Eastern Michigan has skillfully applied his God-given talent for choosing words and turns of phrase, as the exclusive crafter par excellence of courtesy resolutions for the Episcopal Diocese of Eastern Michigan for the last several years, and

WHEREAS, the courtesy resolutions so crafted by Mr. Parker have added a noteworthy air of panache to our convention journals,

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that this Fifteenth Annual Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Eastern Michigan does extend its prayerful thanks and appreciation to Mr. Parker for his unsurpassed skill and for his many years of service in this ministry.

Motion was supported and passed.

### **CLOSING**

Bishop Ousley declared the convention business adjourned and announced that next year's convention would be hosted by the Flint River Valley Convocation at St. Christopher's Church, Grand Blanc, October 15-16, 2010, with the Presiding Bishop in attendance. Holy Eucharist was celebrated following the close of business.

## Address to the 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention of the Diocese of Eastern Michigan

**The Right Reverend Todd Ousley**  
**II Bishop of Eastern Michigan**  
**Grace Episcopal Church, Port Huron**  
**October 24, 2009**

Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?  
*I will with God's help.*

--- *The Book of Common Prayer, page 305*

One year ago when we gathered for the 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention of the Diocese of Eastern Michigan, the setting was St. Paul's Episcopal Church in the City of Flint and we were a few weeks into a national acknowledgement of a deepening recession following a precipitous decline in the stock market. What better setting could there have been for our gathering than in the heart of the community in our diocese most visibly affected by industrial and economic decline? A year later, economists are cautiously proclaiming that the recession is over and that the recovery has begun. Despite leading the nation in unemployment rates hovering near 16% statewide, Michigan, and in particular, the Diocese of Eastern Michigan have reason to celebrate. Congregational income has remained steady, diocesan investments are regaining value, creativity is present and a new spirit of collaboration is taking hold among us. There is indeed Good News to proclaim.

Congregations are willing to think "outside the box" with some being so bold as to ask, "What box?" St. Paul's Flint has chosen to invest in the future of Flint and their ministry to the urban core by boldly staffing themselves for the congregation God is calling them to become rather than the one they currently are and by affiliating with a community organizing group, FACT, **F**lint **A**rea **C**ongregations **T**ogether; St. John's Midland is exploring team ministry while re-imagining its staffing to enhance gospel proclamation to youth and young adults; All Saints' Marysville continues to embrace abundance over scarcity and to defy the odds in its strategic redevelopment; Calvary Hillman and Grace Long Rapids have turned the "crisis" of a clergy vacancy into an opportunity to re-imagine their respective ministries; a joint annual giving and capital campaign is in planning stages at St. Christopher's Grand Blanc; Holy Family Midland has reconfigured its worship and gathering space to be more accessible, more hospitable, more practical --- all of it done with sensitivity to community needs in balance with the local pressures of preserving an Alden B. Dow design; Christ Church East Tawas is not only growing produce for parishioners in its community garden but also sharing the produce with those in need, hosting a local farmers market, and creatively using Angel Food Ministries to provide food to the hungry; Trinity Alpena continues to work for a gentler and more civil society by hosting a summer music series; St. Jude's Fenton continues to practice eco-justice by reducing waste, recycling and exploring conversion to partial solar power; refurbished facilities at St. John the Baptist Otter Lake provide much needed community gathering space in a community with a shrinking number of churches and available public space; St. Paul's Saginaw and St. Andrew's Flint continue to act as beacons of light and hope in the midst of unimaginable poverty and the downward spiral of violence and despair; Trinity Bay City is leading the way in our ecumenical agreement with the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. by embracing as one of their own the Rev. Valerie "Dr.Val" Fargo, Presbyterian pastor, biblical scholar and faculty-member of our new Coppage-Gordon School for Ministry; all across this diocese, the hungry are fed, the hurting are healed, the sick and prisoners are visited, Good News is being proclaimed and works of justice and mercy are being carried out in the name of Christ. Yes, we do have Good News to proclaim.

Good News . . . yes . . . perfect news . . . no. The past year has not been without its challenges. The population within our diocesan boundaries has declined 1.6% since 2000 while our Average Sunday Attendance as a diocese over that same time period has declined 28.5% with a 2.1% drop from 2007 to 2008. Congregational budgets and programs are, for the most part, in maintenance mode --- having remained essentially unchanged over the past seven years --- while during the same time period diocesan income has remained flat, resulting in staff reductions and creative re-imagining of mission imperatives. Yet, we do have Good News to proclaim.

In his letter to the Church in Ephesus, St. Paul reminds us of the power of God at work within us that is able to accomplish abundantly more than we can ask or imagine (Ephesians 3:20). Power from God . . . at work within us . . . able to accomplish abundantly more than we can ask or imagine. Power from God. Not power from me. Not power from you. But power from God. On the evening of June 12<sup>th</sup> of this year, I sat in my living room with my feet up, relaxing while watching a movie with Ann and Josh, our youngest son. At first I thought the pressure in my chest was the pepperoni pizza I had eaten earlier that evening coming back to revisit me. Shifting in the chair did not relieve the pressure and the discomfort only increased. Within twenty minutes the pressure had also become a tingling in my arm, shortness of breath, a clammy feeling and waves of nausea. Four weeks shy of my 48<sup>th</sup> birthday, I was experiencing my first heart attack. I pray it will be my last. Over the next few weeks I was forced to re-examine my diet, my lifestyle, my exercise --- or lack thereof --- in short, all those things which might have led to a heart attack. My cardiologist and my primary physician both said the same thing. I'm lucky. There's no lasting damage. All my numbers look good, but I must be more attentive to my diet and exercise. That's good news --- not necessarily fun or easy to do, but certainly doable with some concerted effort. And one more thing: I must reduce my stress. So, how am I doing? With support from my physician, my wife and children, the wonderful staff at the Diocesan Center and your continued prayers and encouragement, I feel good today. But what about the stress? It's still there. It still needs a bit of reduction; maybe even a lot of reduction. But I have been reminded that the greatest stress reliever is to remember that I'm not called to use my own power to effect change, to usher in the reign of God, to turn around the economy or to solve the challenges presented to the Diocese of Eastern Michigan, The Episcopal Church or the worldwide Anglican Communion. It is the power of God that will do all those things.

A heart attack was a gift to me, a wake-up call, and an opportunity to re-prioritize my life and to make some changes before it's too late. And we have the same opportunity as the people of God called the Diocese of Eastern Michigan. We can continue with our old habits, our well-worn paths, and we'll get predictable results: more of the same that we've been getting. How does that sound? Declining population, declining revenue and declining attendance. Or we can get out of the way and allow the power of God working in us to do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine. The stark reality is that we have a choice between life and death. Which will we choose? I choose life.

Sean Rowe, Bishop of Northwestern Pennsylvania, the youngest bishop in the Anglican Communion at age 34, may be young but he has a depth of wisdom well beyond his years. In the midst of sometimes tedious discussions in the House of Bishops, he is fond of reminding us of the foolishness of continuing down paths that have led to unwanted results like broken relationships and institutional decline. He asks us, "How's that working for you?" How's that working for you? How has our past behavior worked for us? Is it the behavior we want and need for the future that God intends for us?

The time for this diocese to acknowledge the power of God working in us is now. Not our own power or our own designs about how to be church but the power of God working in us that can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine. I believe that God is continuing to call us into partnership for great things. We are being called to shed institutional structures that

inhibit our growth and fuel our decline; we are being called to travel more lightly and to risk more imaginatively for the kingdom of God; we are being called to stop hoarding our private treasure and to share the abundance so graciously given to us by God; we are being called to focus our energies on life not death; we are being called to work together, to set aside selfish agendas and allow the power of God to work through us to do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine.

Over this past year I have shared with you through the fruits of an ongoing process of listening to people from around this diocese as you have expressed your hopes and dreams for this Church. The result is not a flowery and lengthy vision or mission statement or purpose but rather four simple words: Pray, Learn, Serve, Grow. You have said that those are the priorities. You have said that you want a collaborative partnership that enables you to Pray, Learn, Serve and Grow. Those four words are guiding me and the rest of the people and structures of this diocese as we strive to serve God through serving you. As the Diocesan Review Task Force continues its work over this next year --- having convened for the first time a couple of weeks ago --- they will be seeking to find ways to further align our structures, our program, our Constitution and Canons to facilitate our life together as we Pray, Learn, Serve and Grow. Those four words are, in essence, a reminder to us to return to the fundamentals of what shapes us as we strive to live out our Baptismal Covenant. It is a call to focus our efforts and energies, to be good stewards of the gifts given to us by God, and to use those gifts for furthering God's Reign of peace and justice.

Glory to God whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine: Glory to God from generation to generation in the Church, and in Christ Jesus for ever and ever. Amen.

*Ephesians 3:20, 21*

### **Keynote Address to Diocesan Convention October 23-24, 2009 at Grace Church, Port Huron The Reverend Peter Rood**

It is a pleasure to be here, and I bring greetings from the Diocese of Los Angeles and the people of Holy Nativity, Westchester. As I was preparing this talk, and reminiscing about when my children were younger, it brought to mind a T-ball game. Most of the time I just sat in the stands but there was this one particular game where I was recruited to coach third base. Danny was up to bat and Billy was at second base. I got down low and I looked at Billy, and said "I got you, just look at me". Suddenly there is a whack, and the ball is going deep into the infield, and going right through the legs of the second baseman. So I say "Billy, come on, follow me, watch me". So Billy starts running, and I realize he can make it so I yell, "Come on Billy, GO HOME, GO HOME!" Then he stops and puts his head down, and he walks that way. I think I may have ruined him for life, and I run after him and hold him and say "No, I didn't mean that. I share that story with you because this is not an address, it's maybe a muse. I would call it maybe officially a case study, where I am going to talk about what's been going on at God's "little green acre" at 83<sup>rd</sup> and Dunbarton. I hope it will be inspiring. I hope it will be provocative. I hope you won't hear me say "GO HOME". My goal is that you really hear this story of what God is doing, and it's very surprising. I am as astonished as anyone. Some days I just have to step back and be very quiet and say "thank you".

The topic is radical hospitality. It is church as hosting community, and hopefully at the end you'll understand what I'm about to tell you. What I'm trying to get us all to think about today is our work as servants of God. I was raised Roman Catholic, and found my way into an Episcopal Church in my college days, a very radical, hospitable church, that reached out to a person like me. They didn't really care where I stood theologically. They fed me, and there were pretty women there, and I loved going. On Tuesday nights they did lots of rock music, so

they played the kind of music I liked, and it stuck with me, because when I got married, I married an Episcopalian, and the rest, as they say, is history. Professionally, most of my young life and my career path was really focused (not on investment business, which I eventually became involved in), but I was going to be a golf professional. I was going to teach golf. I was in an assistants program, and decided one day that I was in need of spending more time on the golf course, instead of the practice tee. I was engaged to be married, and the golf pro and I had a spat. Some of my students were brokers, and they would show up for a lesson at 1:00 pm on a weekday, and I got to know them. How did they get to do that? Their reply was “we trade on New York time, the market closes at 4:00 pm, so we go out and play golf.” So I thought I would go and apply to a brokerage firm, get off at 1:00 pm and then go play golf. It sounded good to me. I imagined I would be a clerical person, and as fate would have it, they interviewed me, and the next thing I know they paid me to be an investment advisor. They sent me off to training even though I didn’t know the difference between a stock and a golf ball. Thirteen years later, I went off to seminary.

In the meantime, my faith was being formed in many new ways – through the church, and through remarkable people that I ran into. I was the religious guy in the office. I was the guy that talked about God, and my biggest client was World Vision. I would go to a prayer meeting and come back and share. One of my important mentors in that period of time was The Rev. Dr. John Perkins, and I would shut down my computer at the end of the day and go up to northwest Pasadena, which is our tough part of town. I worked with Dr. Perkins, his wife, and others established a Christian Family Center. We claimed a rock house in that community, we used sweat labor and the work of faithful people and established this center – we claimed the community. When I was in high school, you could get any drug you wanted across the street from this location, but even to this day so many years later, that place is clean of drugs and drug addicts. The Christian Center is thriving. Dr. Perkins was an important mentor of mine and part of my important discernment to go off into ministry, as well as my rector, because I went to my rector saying “Something’s going on here when I’m out in the community. I love my work, it’s fun, it’s got good people, many of them faithful people who think about investing from an ethical perspective that not everyone shares in the marketplace”.

My rector suggested that I enter a discernment program, so they plucked me out of my home Episcopal community and dropped me into a much smaller congregation, predominantly African American, struggling to survive, and it was a life-changing experience for me. Then I went off to seminary. Since then I have been a hospital chaplain, worked in a multi-staff parish, and before my call to Holy Nativity, where I have been for seven years, I was a bishop’s chaplain. That was quite an interesting experience. I think everyone, particularly clergy, should spend a week as part of the seminary curriculum, sitting in the bishop’s office fielding phone calls. It is an educational experience. Bishops work hard, we all do in our ministries, but bishops have a very special calling, and we should pray for them at all times. I have had enough systems training to be dangerous, and did the Church Development Institute at General Seminary as a young priest, and then shortly after that had a remarkable year at the feet of Max Depree. I was invited to be one of twelve people to study with this brilliant manager. He founded Herman Miller, a person of faith who writes books about leadership. They have shaped my world, and also my congregation’s world. When the bishop I was chaplain for retired, I had a choice to make...whether to stay on staff, which I did briefly, working for the new bishop in public relations or move on. I decided that I had my fill of being in the Church Center....at heart I’m a pastor, and I wanted to get back into congregational ministry. So I went to the bishops and said “Send me”. A day or so later my bishop came into my office and said “Peter, we got a gig for you...Holy Nativity, Westchester. It’s going to be a tough gig.” That was in 2002.

When I showed up that first Sunday there were 28 people, and eight of them were on the vestry. It is a remarkable congregation with a remarkable history, as well. In the beginning, it’s

all the woman's fault. It's the Genesis story of Holy Nativity, and it's an interesting story because the congregation would not be here today if it were not for the foresight and the vision of one woman named Margaret Brown, who in 1942 graduated from St. Margaret's House where she trained as a deaconess. She showed up in Westchester, during wartime, and she saw that there were lots of things going on – new homes, affordable housing development very close to all the defense industry, lots of women. Margaret Brown challenged the women in the community that she met to raise money to build a church since there wasn't one there. They did bake sales, knocked on doors, and after about eighteen months went to the bishop and said they wanted a priest, and his blessing and authority to open a church in Westchester. They had the money to back it up, and he said "by all means". They held their first mass in a Hughes Aircraft tool shed, and in 1947 they laid the cornerstone for this amazing church. Margaret Brown ponied up \$10,000 in 1947. She was a person of means, but she was not filthy rich. That is equivalent to about \$200,000 today...a lot of money she put down, and made this church happen, as did many other women. It thrived, like many of our churches thrived in the late 1940's and into the 50's. But then things started to change pretty radically and by the 1990's it was in a steep decline. I got one of those charts from 815, a steep decline from 1990 until 2002. About four or five years after it was built they raised enough money to build a school, so there was an Episcopal School, K thru 6, that remained there, a very progressive school for those days, because people were matriculated on the basis of their preparedness. So if it took you a year and a half to finish third grade that was fine - very radical. But it moved to another location in the late 1970's.

I want to talk about churches because my leadership team talked about this. How our community perceived us and how we thought of ourselves. We found ourselves thinking how often we identify ourselves with our buildings. I think it's good, but I want to ask you, and I've tested this out in my community, especially among folks who don't go to church...what does that church say, what does that building communicate? Some people say it's kind of like a fortress. It does not describe a dynamic God, but a static God - a God who is inside, but not necessarily outside, and it often conveys that there is one entry point. Many churches have a pretty grand entrance, and there might be other doors, but unless you are "in the know", you don't know where those doors are. It's hard to find those entry points, and in most cases, churches (after Sunday at about 3:00 pm) are pretty quiet through the week, and in some cases, empty. So the beginning of our transformation at Holy Nativity began when we began to ask some of these questions.

At our very first vestry retreat, praying and reflecting upon what God would have us do in Westchester, we looked at the demographics. We have a community in transition – the folks that moved there in the 1940's are moving out and young families are moving in, and when you ask them what they think of church, they relate it to recreation. So what do you do with that? It's a younger group. The average price of homes in Westchester is \$700,000 that were bought in the 1940's for \$4,700. We began to look at emerging trends and we kept reminding ourselves that...yes we are in a crisis but it is like the two Chinese characters – crisis and opportunity. By the end of our first day together we came to terms and began to not only accept, but imagine and envision what church would be like if we agreed that we needed to look at multi entry points. Expecting folks to come in on Sunday mornings between the hours of 7 to 11 am is a challenge. I think we are limiting ourselves if we just say "that is the primary entry point". We have to be more expansive in the way that we look at bringing folk in, and letting folk move in and out. We knew that at this point, with 28 people in church, we really had nothing to lose. It was a hard time for us all to look at change and how we manage that.

I mentioned that I was a golf pro, so I told them a story that I learned and I use it a lot. When I would be on the lesson tee, and talk to someone who really came seriously to committing to change the way they had been swinging...because they want to hit the ball straight. So I would say "change your grip", and they would change their grip, and then take a

swing and hit the ball really good, and I would say “how did that feel?”...and they replied that it felt great. The fact that it felt great means that you changed your grip somewhere in there back to the way it was. Because the truth is if you stuck with the change I suggested, it would feel terrible. It would feel like you have been told to hold a 2 by 4, not a 9 iron, and that is OK. Any of you who are educators know it’s that disequilibrium that you experience when you are doing something new. But what we agreed to do at that vestry retreat was to accept that, and not only accept but to embrace it, and to keep asking ourselves...if you are all right-handed, it’s like being asked to write left-handed. So we were asking ourselves as a vestry, does this feel right-handed or left-handed? And if it’s feeling like it’s left-handed...if you are a right-handed person...that is good! It means that you are doing something different. So I said let’s try being left-handed, and God bless them, they said Amen.

I want to quote Max Depree, talking about organizations (so I would fill in church) “A place of realized potential opens itself to change, to contrary opinion, to the mystery of potential, to the involvement of unsettling ideas.” We kept coming back to this quote on that retreat, as well as bible study and scripture. It began to have its way with us, so suddenly we began to imagine a different way of being in our community. It was like left-handedness to the tenth power and it was really rough. It wasn’t like we came down off that mountain at the retreat center and all things were well in Westchester. No, that work is still ongoing. That disequilibrium still exists. Another quote from Max, “We cannot become what we need to be, remaining what we are.”

So this is what it feels like.....this unbalance bird, a little bit off kilter...that left-handedness. Does anybody feel like that now and then in the church? It’s about vision. Max also says he makes the distinction between sight and vision, and the importance of both to organizations. “People without sight develop other abilities, people without vision constantly struggle to find hope.” When we read that we said Amen. So that disequilibrium is something that we committed to - living in that tension. I think that not only as a congregation, but as a Church, we have to become more accustomed to that sense of being off kilter. Max also says, “An organization without a view of reality stumbles along for awhile and they don’t succeed, and organizations without vision remain mere organizations, surviving but not living, hitting targets but not moving toward their potential.”

This vision and foresight...conversion...change...transformation...these are all very exciting and creative and prophetic ways of calling the future into being. I would say that we are finding more and more, that’s exactly what has been happening in our little community. Max again, “We can teach ourselves to see things the way they are; only with vision can we see things the way they can be.” So we came down that hill and we decided, okay let’s go, but how are we going to do that. So we decided we are going to commit, we are going to envision that there are going to be as many entry points as there are questions. That is the bedrock where we started. (Picture of a flowing river is projected) Inspiration was drawn from this picture – there is biblical precedence...imagine it as...if anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the scripture says streams of living water will flow from within him. But imagine a community that had a way to enter into that stream, and to experience that living water with as many ways (entry points) as possible. We looked at this as a new form of monasticism, although, at first I struggled with that word. It makes folks think I have to wear strange pajamas and be celibate. I don’t want to do that. What about a monastery or community, where we gather together for spiritual refreshment, for renewal, and for education, recognizing that people come for different reasons? They are pilgrims, just like you and me, and we welcome them, as Christ. We host them. What happens is this wonderful transaction occurs. It’s been one of the surprising elements about what has happened at Holy Nativity. We have considered ourselves hosts with many entry points, by acknowledging those pilgrims as the presence of Christ. We realize that they are hosting us, as well. They have been changing our community. It’s been a very exciting and dynamic process. Jesus himself said “I was a



stranger and you welcomed me”, and we have been trying to take those words seriously. That means that folks have come into our community who have no faith. We even say in our advertising in the newspaper “...people of faith or no faith are welcomed”. Every person in our community is a guest, no matter who they are.

(Diagram of Holy Nativity property is projected on the screen). We have a lot of room to use, a lot of space for folks to use in the community. One particular building used to be called the parish hall. We don't call it the parish hall anymore, now it's the community hall. That's what it has become. There are lots of entry points into our community. This church, when it was founded, and in its heyday dating back to the 40's and 50's, had a bulge where folks were fighting to get in the door. We could be pretty discriminating...as a matter of fact we were. Not everyone was welcome. In our community, it's still on the books, we had covenants against African Americans living in our community. There were also covenants against planting tomatoes in our front yard. That has all changed...in some regards, anyway. So here we are now. Quite honestly, I get people in the church, young families in particular, that when I say “You know... Amazing Grace” and they have no sense that I am talking about a hymn. Some of the folks that are coming through that door between 7:00 am and 1:00 pm on Sunday, need to be taken good care of, because I know what a risk they are taking - how much disequilibrium they are experiencing, and it's a hard entry point. What we are exploring, and my congregation will attest to this, is somewhat radical – radical hospitality. There are two meanings to the word radical. One is the lower part of the plant, a deep-rooted thing that keeps things alive and growing. The other radical means a considerable departure from the usual, or traditional, extreme changes. Hospitality, there's that word again. The root of this word is stranger. Generous and cordial reception of guests offering a pleasant and sustaining environment, readily receptive. Readily receptive, multi entry points, as far as I am concerned that is what that says. Sit with that a moment, take it in. It's a Benedictine way of being, for those of us who are looking for things to hook onto from our tradition. You might call us new Benedictines, or maybe something more catchy would be monastapalians.

What does our church look like today? (Picture of Holy Nativity projected). Some my friends give me a hard time because Californians are very critical about buildings, and this looks too much like New England, so I get a lot of flack. Plus, we don't have stained glass. They say it's very white and not very interesting. There are beautiful tapestries on the walls of the primary entry point to make it more colorful. We have a peace and justice reading group who have been reading a book on Mahatma Ghandi. We meet after church on Sunday and talk. We have a whole rash of cooking classes. I am a frustrated chef and one of my members is a Cordon Blue trained chef and we have quarterly cooking classes. I must give you a little secret for ministry I found, it comes right out of the bible. Jesus and the disciples were eating all the time. It's rarely that we gather together as a community and don't include food and sometimes wine. I love to cook, so I try to make delicious things. We have yoga and are going to introduce Pilates. We have a Zen Center that uses our meditation center and an arts program. We have a sitar player who teaches classes. We have drumming regularly. I was heartened when I was in London this summer to discover that St. Mark's, Middleton, in a changing part of central London, have a drumming class. We have a Shakespeare class for children.

We as a community are faced, as all of us in this country are faced, with what to do after September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001. California Council of Churches established a curriculum to educate folks because we found that over the course of those months following that tragedy we were very ignorant about our brothers and sisters from other faith traditions. I would argue that we were particularly ignorant of the teachings of Islam. So we were part of a pilot program to use this curriculum which looked at all the major faith traditions in California. Except that what we decided to do, given the gravity of the place that we found ourselves in as a community – rather than use the curriculum as it came out of the box, was to invite a Buddhist, a Muslim, a Hindu, so we could to get to know them. Entry points. In the majority of cases, relationships with those

very same people are maintained. They come back and they teach and we have gotten to know them. My Muslim friend claims me as his priest, and I claim him as my imam. We love each other, and he has been known to show up at Christmas. He loves Jesus...not in the same way I love Jesus, but...there is more about Mary in the Koran than in our bible. We learned this as a community. I was a little nervous at first, but my community has encouraged me because they have learned that to know more about these traditions has helped relieve a lot of anxiety they had because of ignorance. We have remained committed to that project, our inter-faith ministry. We have speakers on a regular basis as an acknowledgement of the world we live in.

During Lent we have a program called “soup and spirituality”. I make soup, we have supper and sometimes wine. These are some of the subjects we have had the last few years – we have had people from those faith traditions come and talk about prayer, talk about death and dying, talk about forgiveness, talk about environment, talk about mystics and heretics in their traditions. I must share a moment about death and dying. People were riveted to their chairs, listening to my dear friend, a Hindu nun, talk about how they spend the last hours with their dying. I have used it as a pastor, not for the same reasons, because they of course believe that people go on to the next life. I guess you can say we do, in some sense, but not resurrection life – they are thinking about the next life in Hinduism. So what they do is sing, pray, and coddle their dying because they believe that the last thing they hear when they die, is the first thing they hear in the next life. So I have encouraged myself and families to do the same with our dying – to be with them and love them and sing. We have a couple of Roman Catholic nuns who came to these gatherings, who are also part of a group of environmentalists. One of the sisters is our master gardener. We have “music and the arts” ministry, and jazz vespers. Before I leave the interfaith thing, I want to make one final comment about that. It is that we have learned the good news of the gospel is that we share our stories with our brothers and sisters from other faith traditions, as we hear theirs, and our project is not to convert or be converted by anyone – no, we are helping each other become better Christians, helping me be a better Christian, deepen my faith as I listen to the ways that they look at or organize their world. I, in my own way, support them at being better Muslims and better Hindus.

Now back to our music. We have a jazz vespers service monthly that we have committed to with a well known LA jazz musician. I started meditating about eight years ago as part of my systems training. One of my systems leaders wrote a book about doing systems training and managing change and transition, and managing your own place in it all, through meditation. I also had the privilege of meeting Fr. Lawrence Freeman, who is the head of the World Community for Christian Meditation. It’s actually a world-wide Roman Catholic ministry headquartered in London. I am pleased also to say that we are not the only church to have a meditation center connected to the World Community. Father Kenneth Poppy, Dean of the Cathedral in Burlingame, also has a meditation center associated with the World Community for Christian Meditation. So at Holy Nativity we have meditation twice a day, at noon and at 6:00 pm, and on Saturdays at noon, and that has been an important ministry. Folks come and when we did a blessing of the Center, our local Catholic bishop come. We had our bishop and the Roman Catholic bishop do a special blessing. There were Roman Catholics at the service who were in tears. Part of it is generational, because they grew up a time when they were told never to darken the door of an Episcopal church...entry points. They were touched to see their bishop and our bishop pray together. So even to this day, as a matter of fact tomorrow, we have a Saturday retreat 9:00 am to 3:00 pm, with a woman who lectures at Oxford, who has written a wonderful book called “Dancing with your Shadow”. She is a presenter, we meditate, we have a talk, we meditate again, break for lunch, meditate, talk, and go home. We have these Saturday retreats or evening retreats on Sunday and people come from the whole neighborhood – it’s not just for Episcopalians.

So onto our environmental ministry (picture of garden projected). Environmental change-makers was again an entry point. A woman who used our church leads the 150 families in our community that are home-schoolers. A lot of them are affiliated with our local university, within walking distance to Loyola-Marymount, a lot of faculty and spouses are involved. They use our facility for music or art. The leader of this group approached me one day and shared with me her interest in using the hall as a community gathering place to talk about matters pertaining to the environment. This is truly a grass-roots organization that emerged simply by opening our doors. Joann is a very gifted person, an active environmentalist, and she is often asked because she is on-site a lot, "are you a member?" She always hesitates because she is really not sure what people mean by that. We live in that tension right now. I think she is, as we all are, together. She is a little concerned she might mis-communicate what other folks might think it means to "be a member". So we started meeting with maybe 8-10 people, and we designed it around a support group. We always get together and start our meetings off by sharing positive environmental news and solutions - things that we have explored. Now you might have it in your mind, since I am from California, that what we have here is a bunch of tree-hugging, dreadlocked, people with rainbows and earrings. No, these folks come from the community. They have faith, no faith, Jews, Lutherans, Presbyterians, and have had a few Hindus show up. It's a remarkable group and some of them drive SUV's, but we all share an understanding that somehow, "this ain't right". This isn't right and we need one another to educate ourselves and to support one another, to change some of the things we are doing.

This was four years ago - we were very excited when we started forcing our local grocery store to allow people to bring in cloth bags. We were going to start there. We started at church getting rid of all of our paper products. Everyone thinks we are rather "elegant" because we bring china out. We have cutlery, napkins, because we have eliminated all the paper products, and it looks beautiful. All these things emerged from these crazy people that we let in our campus, who shared with us this effort to change. About a year into this group, we invited Ed Begley, Jr., who is an actor and environmentalist, and for the first time ever, even including Christmas and Easter, we had standing room only in our church. The place was packed and there were TV cameras there. It was just amazing and a complete hoot. Ed Begley encouraged us, and it has been our mantra as environmental change-makers, for all of the folk here and all the people you know, who don't know this already - start small. As Ed Begley says, "start with low-hanging fruit". It's like the napkins, or CFL bulbs in your church. We have declared a Styrofoam-free zone at church. We tried a car pool, but it hasn't always been successful. We declared a biking day - biking, walking, and car pooling day at church. If it's nice, we get five or six bikes from the people in the neighborhood. We are going to stay at it and support each other. The group has gone and marched on the main street in our neighborhood, and we had about thirty people show up for "climate action day". We coordinate biking groups, where we ride to the grocery store, pick up our groceries and ride back. In our densely populated neighborhoods, this takes less time than driving to the store, finding a parking space, and driving home. So we bring folks together and let them experience it even though some folks haven't ridden bikes in twenty years. We have re-skilling events. My grandmother taught me how to bake bread and so I am passing on that knowledge to others. I love to bake so we have baking classes as well as our cooking classes. Again, we will get forty people showing up. We have pickling classes and conducted a class in how to make solar cookers. They cost \$7.00 to make. This took place on a Thursday and on Sunday I got to the church about 6:30 am, prepared a stew, put it in my solar cooker and by 11:30 am when the service was over, we had stew.

Believe it or not, tomorrow is International Day of Climate Action, and it's going to be the single-most widespread day of political action the planet has ever seen. They are closing in on 170 nations who are participating and over 4,000 events and rallies that are taking place all over the world. There is going to be a teach-in tomorrow at my church and people in all these places

around the world will be saying the same thing – that science tells us that we can't have more than 350 ppm of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere if we want the planet like we have enjoyed it. We are committed to that. Our own church at last General Convention, has signed on to the Genesis Covenant. I would encourage you to look at the Genesis Covenant and what we have agreed to do as a community, and to reduce our own congregational carbon footprint by 50% in ten years. I would be happy to share with you how we have been in the process of doing that, and how we are recommitting to do even more. I think it's something that's critical for the Church to commit to and be involved in.

Our environmental ministry, and all those folks we let flood into our community, really shaped the way we started looking at our world. Again, on one of those retreats, we were talking about entry points. We had come up with a growth plan every year, as a vestry, basically to put stuff down in writing and set some goals and we revisit it through our life together. We asked the question, "we do outreach, support our local food pantry, what would multi-entry points look like, in reference to our outreach?" Someone said, "Why don't we grow food on campus...why don't we establish a community garden?" It was a holy moment. We started and brought in a wonderful group, based in Detroit, who did urban farming. They have converted urban areas and made these amazing community gardens. People are getting fed and people are learning how to grow food. They had never worked with a church before and were exceptionally helpful. We knew we were embarking on something fairly radical. What was the mantra? Does it feel "left-handed"? And if it does, that is good. What are folks going to say if, on this corner, we are going to tear up all the lawn, the bushes, and take out that magnolia tree? (Pictures shown of before and after the project). There is a lot of sermon material there – you may think there is nothing there, but there is lots of potential. Whenever you feel like you are in that vast, arid, and dark space, and are wondering, "will anything ever grow?" Just remember the possibilities. We got all these folks – Girl Scouts and people from the community. Urban farming taught us how to be in connection with the news media. One day we saw helicopters flying over with TV cameras showing an aerial view of this garden in Westchester. Never had that happen before in church. We decided, rather than going with single rows, since there were covenants in our community against gardening, that we were going to demonstrate to the community that we could landscape and make it look beautiful. And not only will it look better than lawn, it's going to feed people, because we knew we were going to grow food to feed the hungry. That was radical. There are 37 million Americans who suffer from food insecurity. 12 million of them are children. Foresight...vision...what the world might look like. We tried to make it pretty. We spent a lot of money on fencing so that when you drive by, the neighbors will say, "you know what – my yard could look better".

Now I have to tell you a story. We had gates on either end of the garden and a pathway through, and in the middle on the road side, a double gate for bringing in compost, so a truck can get in. We were rushing for the grand opening, which included TV cameras, and didn't have enough time to put the gates on, and as it turns out, we still have not to this day. Again, what happened was we found people walking through almost every day. We don't want them to feel like they have to open a door – they can simply walk in. Our sign says, "growing food for the hungry". At our opening there was a Catholic monsignor, and a Jewish rabbi who presided with me. He blew the shofar, which was a very moving moment and shared a teaching from the Torah – when you think that the messiah is coming, you know what you do - plant a tree. The Catholics provided the seeds and my friends from the Muslim community planted citrus trees. The garden started as about 1,400 square feet of land and we are up to 2,000 square feet now. So we have taken out our lawn and my bishop knows that I am on a personal crusade to challenge all of the faith communities that have lawns to tear them out and to plant food. Does anyone remember Victory Gardens? 20 million Americans had Victory Gardens, and for a very good cause. I would suggest that congregations could join in on this very good cause, to help people who are hungry. Our food pantries (as I am sure yours are in Michigan) are in great

need, with unemployment as high as it is. Food insecurity is a major issue and we could do a lot if we all partner together and grew food.

Lawns - Americans spend 30 billion dollars every year to maintain over 23 million acres of lawn. Some of those acres are owned by churches. That is an average of over 1/3 acre at \$517 each. So consider that. I said I would be provocative today. Our compost for the garden came from the LA Zen Center. We have Shasta daisies that came from the Ashram down the hill from us in Marina Del Ray. Like I said the Catholics furnished seeds, our Muslim and Jewish brothers and sisters planted citrus trees. Other faithful people were involved in urban farming. We also have a medicinal herb garden for people in our community that are exploring how to use sage and oregano and in different ways.

We are in the third year of drought in California. I had this strange piece of mail come that had pages downloaded from the internet regarding farming, political activism and environmental activism, and a check for \$5,000 – nothing else except the typed words “thank you”. No address but a name was on the check. I took it to the bank, and asked if it was good. \$5,000 dropped out of the sky, so we invested the money and bought cisterns. They hold 1,200 gallons and gather water coming off of our rooftop. So we are capturing water that would otherwise just wash away. I love compost, and I think there is a sermon in that. We committed to making an effort to reduce the amount of things that we send to the landfill. A lot of people just throw everything in the trash can, but we are making an effort to reduce. The best thing that has happened this last year is, my gardeners have been trained not to put anything in the yard waste bins, but to compost everything. We are growing enough food that it doesn't cost us a thing to compost. I love what Wendell Barry wrote, “If a healthy soil is full of death, it is also full of life – worms, fungi, microorganisms of all kinds. Given only the health of the soil, nothing that dies is dead for long. If you die in Christ, in Him you will be raised to new life. The divine economy brings life from death, on earth and in heaven.”

It has morphed again. Our garden has done funny things. It has grown new things, and that is our gardeners that gathered to maintain the garden. Every Thursday we have a work group with a variety of folk that show up who are working and harvesting, and we deliver our food on Friday to the food pantry – fresh, organic food. We were talking, and among our gardeners some of them had more squash, and some had too many citrus trees. So we talked about trading and created “Harvest Westchester”. We wrote an article in the local newspaper, asking members of the community who had too much fruit from their citrus trees, to allow us to pick up fruit from their homes, or to pick the fruit ourselves. On Thursday, the folks in the community also know they can drop off fruit. It has added hundreds of pounds of what we deliver each week to our food pantry.

I hope that you will take time to look at what you are being called to do in the future. I would say intentionally, just for a period of time, you ruminate un-tethered from the past, so that you will be intensely focused on the future - believing that it is the future to which God is calling us all. It's a very imaginative, creative process, where you try to think as divergently and radically and as broadly as possible, and you feel like the off-balance bird. But when you are with folk that are really wanting to spread the good news, to share in God's life changing activity in our lives, we hang in there together during this period of disequilibrium. It's going to be all right when we feel like that sea gull. It's the evidence, as you feel that way that you are on the right path - a new way to follow Jesus, perhaps, in a fresh and exciting new direction. Jesus said the kingdom of God is coming, the poor will be fed, and good things will come to the meek, they will be blessed. A conventional interpretation of this teaching is that God will do all of that...eventually. Hearing this with a visionary, future-oriented point of view, this new way of seeing, means that we believe these things. That the kingdom of God is not only coming, it's happening right here and now. So all of us who follow Jesus are going to start to build that kingdom, be involved in the building of that kingdom, and if God wills it, we are going to get there early. That's my hope.

This is a huge icon (image projected on screen) that was painted by one of our local artists. It is inside the church but it depicts the community, with Holy Mother, and Blessed Jesus out on our lawn, which soon will be a garden, if God will help me do that. We've got people - we've got the Reptile Lady who comes for our Blessing of the Animals, people gardening, drumming, music, folks from the inter-faith traditions represented. Notice it's not a building, as much as an activity, an engagement. The question is who is engaging whom. Are people coming into the community or are we going out in the community? It's something that takes my breath away on Sundays because from my presider's chair, I can stare right up at it. That's radical hospitality.

All this activity has been helped enormously, certainly God has blessed us, but this was disequilibrium for yours truly, because my community felt that we needed to get the message out better than we had been. There are folks in my community, Chris, who is a journalist for USA Today, and his partner who works for a subsidiary of the National Enquirer, who are key people for our public relations team. This is what they didn't teach me in seminary. In the old days when I first started at Holy Nativity, I would send out a press release or an article and then pout when nothing got into the newspaper. I have looked back at some of those press releases, and they were written like seminary essays. No wonder they didn't publish them. Chris said, "Peter, I used to sit on Mondays right before the deadline thinking, how am I going to fill this blank page, and I would have a stack of things that had come in, a lot of them written just like the things you would write. But if you write something that can just be dropped into the newspaper, it will get published". Besides teaching me that, they taught me that I needed to get my picture taken with "your head really big". Basically, in their gentle and patient way, they have encouraged me to make noise. They have convinced me that the community wants to hear from us, believe it or not. They want to hear that we are doing radical things, not maybe as much as our music programs, but about things like Harvest Westchester.

That is a classic example. I wrote a little piece about what we were trying to do to harvest, and asked the community to contribute. It went viral. It was only sent to five newspapers in our area, but a journalist who had reported on us before called me and said, "I'd like to do a story". He interviewed me on the phone, came and took a picture of me harvesting tangelos on a ladder, and it was on the front page of our daily newspaper, above fold, which those of you who know in the newspaper business, is a big deal. That morning, from the time I arrived in the office until about mid-afternoon, the phone was ringing off the hook with people wanting to register their fruit trees because they wanted to do something good. They were glad that somebody had taken the effort to help them do something good. The next thing I know, I had a TV crew interviewing me for the six o'clock news. That's not anything I could have done without smarter people than I am, doing some very good and patient coaching with me. I leave that with you. As you start to vision and think, I want to encourage you to make noise. Make noise for Jesus. I think the community really expects that of us. Not silence. That is something that I have learned in all of this. That is something that radical hospitality has taught me - to just make noise about that, to invite folks in and enjoy the spirit of God in our midst. I thank you for your attention.

**CONGREGATIONS IN UNION with CONVENTION  
of the DIOCESE OF EASTERN MICHIGAN  
October 23 and 24, 2009**

<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
Oscoda	Oscoda	St. John's (name change) ***	1880	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

\*\*\*As of 2004 known as Hope-St. John's (with ELCA)