

Address to the 180th Diocesan Convention

The Rt. Rev. Edwin F. Gulick Jr., Bishop of the Diocese of Kentucky

On June 5, 2008, which will be the anniversary of my ordination as a deacon, I will celebrate 35 years of ordained ministry. Of those 35 years, I have learned along with St. Paul how to be abased and how to abound. Like Joseph, I have observed lean years and fat years, but never—and I want you to hear this—never have I felt so lavishly blessed, so joy filled, so humbled by grace upon grace as this past year as bishop of this amazing diocese! In fact, twice I said to Barbara—which probably reveals my neurosis more than my faith—that I feel so joyful I hope I am not about to die. Why such joy?

- One morning I attended something called Freedom School to be the “guest reader.” I watched inner city African American youth being engaged and being transformed by this amazing program and met some brilliant young college students who were serving as their mentors.

- Within a week of that experience, I served as the co-chaplain for this year’s Senior High Camp. I gave a talk on the sacraments because Ben Linder [*the diocese’s director of youth and young adults programs*] wanted the Senior High Camp to be a kind of practice happening, and that program includes the sacraments talk. After that talk, two young people who were at that camp came and asked me to administer baptism to them.

- I ordained in the past year six of the most amazingly different, brilliant, faithful clergy I have ever engaged who are and will be a tremendous gift to this diocese.

Helen Jones, the associate priest at St. Matthew’s, began a conversation about ministry with her bishop, and the result of that was that after several decades as a deacon, this wisdom person (master’s and doctor of divinity) is now living the life of a priest among us.

Karl Lusk, vicar of St. Thomas, Campbellsville, gave up a career in a family funeral business, worked as lay evangelist in Campbellsville and at the same time earned his master’s in theology from Louisville Seminary.

Alice Nichols surrendered a thriving therapy practice in Nashville, Tenn., earned a master’s of divinity at Vanderbilt and is now rector of Christ Church, Elizabethtown.

Candyce Loescher left a career in business to pursue her master’s of divinity at Virginia Seminary, feeling called to do small town ministry. She was released from the Diocese of Atlanta and is the much loved rector of St. Mary’s, Madisonville.

Matthew Bradley, the youngest ordinand in my time as bishop, grew up into Christ at St. Paul’s, Louisville, All Saints’ Center, and the Campus Ministries of Tulane University. Serving presently in the Episcopal ministry at the University of Maryland, he will become priest in charge at St. John’s Church, Murray, and will be the Episcopal chaplain at Murray State University.

Anne Vouga, scripture prize winner at the Louisville Seminary, even though she is an Episcopalian ... knowledgeable in Hebrew, Greek, German and French, scholar, gifted pastor, will return to St. Mark’s, Louisville, and assist the rector in that thriving congregation.

We dedicated the fantastic new inn and lodge at All Saints’, and we have had a Cursillo there, a retreat on Miroslav Volf’s book *Free of Charge* that drew 45 participants,

an amazing clergy conference, youth weekends, six sessions of the lay and deacons school, plus seven or eight vestry planning retreats. We have clusters of young adult ministries springing up all over this diocese, from the

Sunday evening gatherings at Grace, Paducah, to groups at St. Matthew’s, Louisville, and a group related to the campus ministry at University of Louisville. The clergy leaders of these groups, all under 35, are planning a retreat to bring them together at All Saints’.

A young man, Jacob, from our Sudanese congregation at Resurrection is completing his religious studies major at Berea College and wants to go to seminary.

And amazingly a group of Koreans want to form themselves into an Episcopal Church. Their former pastor became an Episcopalian, and they want to explore the possibility of following him into our denomination.

At our most recent retreat for persons considering the priesthood, two had been directly influenced by our summer programs at All Saints’ and four were under 35.

Our diocesan budget, produced by 36 congregations, has increased by over \$85,000, nearly nine percent.

There is a Baptist hymn about “Showers of Blessings.” Well, I feel drenched! In order to reflect on this state of the diocese since our last convention, I am going to use as a template for this portion of my address our diocesan mission statement.

The mission of the Diocese of Kentucky is called to engage the world as a witness to Christ, through worship, study, fellowship, evangelism, social justice and service.

Worship St. Augustine states that we were made to adore the mystery of our redemption. In other words, we are made to worship and we will worship either the living God or idols of our own making. Present day idol worship might include the worship of others like friends, spouse or children, and the worship of wealth called “mammon” by Jesus, and Madison Avenue, which wants to encourage the worship of ourselves — narcissism being the epidemic sickness in our self-obsessed culture.

But in worshiping the Living God, who is the Father of Jesus Christ, we adore and we are also adored. We do that most human of actions by giving glory to God and in so doing we discover whose we are. We discover that we are created out of love and for love. Genesis tells us that God saw what was created and it was good, and St. Paul reminds us that we were bought with a price and, therefore, we are to glorify God with our redeemed bodies. Good, effective liturgy is always about the glory of God and the



reclothing in our rightful mind of the worshipping community.

The experience of liturgy in the Episcopal Church should enable those who show up to give God glory. This takes tremendous effort and attention to details of practice, art, music, space, color, smell and preparation.

A Eucharist celebrated at St. Luke’s

Chapel at the Episcopal Church Home must allow hearing and vision for those who are diminished in both. Present worship at St. Luke’s Chapel, simply because of space, demeans the people of God. Our most senior Episcopalian, who have lived their lives for this church, are crowded into space that is inappropriate, and in the waning days of their lives in ministry watch liturgy on TV. We must do better for them.

A liturgy at All Saints’ for sixth graders must be sensitive to music that relates, a narrative approach to the Gospel that engages, a sermon that is age appropriate, and prayers of the people that reflect the life and concerns of that unique community. Whether it is St. Luke’s Chapel or a sixth-grade conference at All Saints’, much more is required than turning to page 355 in the prayer book and droning on!

Our parish liturgies, grounded in the *Book of Common Prayer* or other approved liturgical resources, should be very sensitively designed for the multiple constituencies in any given congregation on a Sunday morning. And what might be some questions to ask?

- Is the music in any way related to the “song” of the culture?
- Are children welcomed as the full members of the body of Christ that they are? Do we ever use, say, hymns from ‘Lift Every Voice’ because they contain great favorites from the evangelical traditions of our very area, or do we insist that everyone in our church must be English? Is our music a bridge or is it a roadblock?

- Is preaching carefully prepared, well exegeted and occasionally multimedia supported?
- Do we still use the prayer for the whole state of Christ’s Church with its outdated assumptions about a universal western style Christendom, or do we weave themes from the lectionary and from prayers that offer to God our passion, our truest need, our hopes and our dreams that have a quality of matching God’s hopes and God’s dreams? As I visit parishes, it breaks my heart sometimes that the dead portion of the service is the Prayers of the People.

With David Simmons’ departure to the north, to the Diocese of Milwaukee, we have a responsibility to rethink our liturgical commission, and we’re doing so. I hope this newly appointed commission will be as creative and faithful to our tradition as the recent planning committee of the acolyte

festival. That liturgy included, in one liturgy, drama, dance, hand bells, incense, special prayers of the people, a well exegeted and interesting sermon, gender equality in the participants, and the engaged participation of children. All rubrics of the prayer book were used and the worship of the living God was very exciting.

We worship well in this diocese, but we can do it even better. We will work to link the work of the Liturgical Commission and the Evangelical Commission.

Study In this diocese we are also committed to the ministry of study or to use a more contemporary term – formation. The church at its diocesan and congregational expression must, to use Paul’s words, “deliver what we have received.”

As bishop, I was so grateful to Ben Linder and our Christian Formation Department for the outstanding session of camp that we had last summer. Our attendance increased, and our programming was enhanced. This past summer’s staff was unsurpassed in their faithfulness as young Christians passionate about the Gospel and passionate about the Episcopal Church. They were highly intelligent, committed to their ministries, engaged by the community of faith they formed as a staff and so committed to mission that their summer of service culminated in their forming a mission team to work for a week in New Orleans. They came from places like Centre College and Murray State University, Davidson College, the University of Kentucky. They represented Caucasian, Asian and African American folks, and they loved each other in Jesus Christ in a palpable way.

The campers were involved in profound experiential Christian education, engaged the camp activities, and in the case of Senior High Camp, all renewed their commitment to Jesus Christ as two were baptized by immersion in the Rough River. One of the great moments of my life was that moment—and what was so powerful—came after that service when two of the godparents who had been at Senior High Camp all week came to me and said some really profound theology. They had been doing “trust falls” as part of that camp. They said, “Bishop Ted, I get it. Holy Baptism is the ultimate trust fall.” They’ll never be the same—those kids—after that camp.

This year we hope to continue to grow the program. In the not too distant future, we will come to this convention to get funding for a reading camp, a camp for special needs children and a camp for children whose parents are incarcerated, which is a major thrust of the national Episcopal Church’s work.

In addition to our annual fall retreat and our fall Cursillo, the late breaking news in adult study in formation is the school for lay and diaconal ministry. This new initiative, developed by our diocesan community of vocational deacons under the able leadership of Rose Bogal-Allbritten, established a program of formation and training for laity who are particularly alive to the call of Christ to enhanced service in the church and for the sake of the world. Each monthly residential weekend involves sitting at the feet of renowned scholars of the Christian

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tradition and growing in an understanding of a commitment to Christ and his mission. Scholars such as Johanna Bos at Louisville Seminary, Bill Brosend from Sewanee, and Robert Wright from General Theological Seminary have contributed their scholarship to the formation of these intentional adult Christians. I am so glad this program has begun, and it will change this diocese for the good.

Fellowship Fellowship—we're to be about fellowship. The biblical word is communion—*koinonia*. It is the byproduct of life in Christ, which is lived in worship, study and service. The fellowship that results from serving on a Cursillo team, being an adult volunteer at All Saints', staffing a youth mission trip to the Dominican Republic, teaming up to deliver mail at the Episcopal Church Home or staffing the gift shop at Norton Hospital is the byproduct of intentional service. The best fellowship comes out of serving together.

Fellowship is the relationship that Christians have when they know that the waters of baptism are thicker than blood. Sisters and brothers in Christ, serving Christ together, create fellowship. Sisters and brothers gathered at the same Eucharist, engaged in intentional study or practice, and serving Jesus together experience the gift of communion—the gift of fellowship. In the power of this gift of fellowship, differences of class and race and politics and gender and even our most cherished opinions surrender to the larger gift of 'intentional relatedness' that defines and enhances our life in Jesus.

Evangelism There is some very good news to report in the area of evangelism and there are some concerns.

The good news:

- Adult baptisms in our diocese increased 25 percent.
- Confirmations increased significantly from 140 to 160. That's a 15 percent jump.
- And the most interesting thing was that receptions went from 30 to 63 (a 101 percent increase). About receptions, I need to note: I happened to be doing the Eucharist on Ash Wednesday at St. John's Church in Murray and noticed a very attractive and well attended tract rack. It had been about 15 years since I had to order anything from Forward Movement publications. I read a tract on welcoming former Roman Catholics to the Episcopal Church. It was brilliantly written. Clear. It was not seductive. It honored the Roman Catholic tradition; it honored our tradition; and it explained to the seeking former Roman Catholic what the Episcopal Church was in a very clear, concise way. I believe that is part of the harvest that God is offering to us. Rarely do my bishops' addresses get this specific, I understand, but

I would hope that all of you would write Forward Movement and order that specific tract.

The concerning news:

- Both Sunday attendance and total membership declined.
- Sunday attendance went from 3,913 to 3,895, which may simply reflect that Christmas Eve was on Sunday in 2006. In fact I think that's what happened, along with the fact that we had a drought in western Kentucky, and it's hard to go to church in the middle of a drought.
- Two of our congregations purged their lists

(St. Francis and Church of the Ascension) and that took us two persons under our 10,000 total memberships for the first time. Now I baptized a couple of people and confirmed several, so I think we are back up. I don't want us to get into a panic.

The Evangelism Commission will be expanded to reflect gender, age and racial diversity. It will interface with both the Christian Formation Department and the Liturgical Commission to help our congregations provide liturgy and programming that will be effective and compelling for the un-churched and under-churched.

Additionally, the commission will have the immediate responsibility of purchasing land for a church in LaGrange, where our demographic studies indicate a new congregation is needed, and the commission will partner with St. Andrew's, Glasgow, to procure a building sufficient to its present needs.

How will we do that? Through the help of the Holy Spirit and through, we hope, an obscure legacy discovered by the city of Louisville from a family named Ballard who some 80 years ago gave some land to the city and said that if the city didn't use it for a park it would go to the Episcopal Church. The city got a wonderful plan for some wonderful creative urban housing, and we are in a lawsuit. It looks like, though, there has been some significant energy on the city's part to settle that suit. Keep your prayers going. It will create resources to do both of those things if we are successful. Thank God for the generosity of the saints of the past.

The Rev. Karl Lusk, working with Chris Gibbs, has compared every congregation's growth in the diocese with their respective counties' growth. This work will be the foundation for the commission's work in the immediate future. The data reveals that some of our congregations have far exceeded the growth of their counties and some have not been able to keep up with their counties' growth. We must ask, in both instances, why — why the amazing success and why the lag.

Social Justice We also vow to strive for justice, which is our baptismal promise. It means striving that each person who bears the dignity of being created in the image of God will be able to live a life that reflects that dignified status. Our Jubilee Centers support that effort through direct assistance, tutoring, shelters, refugee resettlement, and food assistance.

This year we add to these efforts a more intentional focus on working with our companion diocese in Byumba, Rwanda. A clinic is desperately needed in the town of Byumba, and Onesphore Rwaje has shared his vision for that clinic with both his companion bishops—Idris Jones in Glasgow, Scotland, and with me. With the reestablishment of the missionary offering renamed "The Alleluia Fund," we hope that every Episcopalian from our children to the residents of the Episcopal Church Home will participate in this one great season of sharing. Some might participate by creating offering cans made of decorated coffee containers, setting aside one tenth of the family food budget and during lent filling those cans. At the other extreme, people who have been blessed with wealth beyond their needs might even set aside a portion of their over-funded 401 or 403 plans towards this goal. And there can be a lot of giving in between.

It is my dream, and perhaps God's as well,

that we will help build this clinic and then over the years send medical mission teams to do ministry there. So many nurses and physicians in the diocese seem ready to offer themselves for this service. I hope we will make it happen.

Service Our Baptismal Covenant compels us to seek and serve Christ in all persons. There are more examples of this Christ-centered service going on in our diocese than I can possibly describe or even know about. St. Francis, St. Matthew's, Grace Church (Paducah) and Grace Church (Hopkinsville) have been engaged in mission trips, both foreign and domestic. St. Andrew's Church, Glasgow, went to Camp Coast Care for the second time this past year.

There are lay ministries of service, however, that I want to highlight. There could have been 303, but there are three I want to highlight: one from Louisville, one from Fort Knox and one in Hopkinsville.

- There are hundreds of lawyers in our diocese, and they all do pro bono work, but one that I know of invests his life in the future of inner city youth.

Don Vish, communicant of the Church of the Advent, spends a good bit of time developing the "photographic eye" of young folks. He has taught a group of young people photography skills, and these young people produced a series of fantastic pictures of doors of the Episcopal churches in our diocese. Don served Jesus in these young people by teaching them a skill.

- Ed Lane, a member of St. Peter's Church, and a participant in our lay/diaconal school, has a ministry to soldiers—especially young recruits being trained at Fort Knox. With the shortage of active duty chaplains because of the conflict in Iraq and Afghanistan, there is at present neither an Evangelical Lutheran pastor nor an Episcopal priest assigned to Fort Knox. With help from local clergy, now especially Larry Minter and Mark Linder, he keeps liturgical ministry available to these young men. He has pressed his bishop into service for Easter services and confirmations, and he has used our clergy for baptisms and regular Eucharists. Young recruits are so open to this ministry; they are desperate for it. Ed Lane takes care of that as best he can, week after week after week.

- The third ministry of service that I would like to highlight is a ministry of several women from Grace Church, Hopkinsville, to residents of the nursing homes of our state mental hospital in Hopkinsville. There is probably no more forgotten corner of this diocese than the nursing unit of a state mental hospital. But every Thursday Episcopalian from Grace Hopkinsville turn that forgotten corner into the realm of God by their presence.

Our greatest new initiative this past year has been the establishing of the "Freedom School" program developed by Marian Wright Edelman and offered at St. George's Community Center. Through the hard work of Arthur Cox, director of the center, and Chip Sutherland, board chair, and with the generous financial support of Sally Brown, a philanthropically able and generous Episcopalian, we were able to hire an amazing staff of young African American college students and offer this program for the first time at St. George's. Through intense instruction in reading and life skills, fun, growth in self esteem and community building, we will help transform and empower the lives of our next generation of African American leaders. This program, which was

considered one of the three best in the United States, would not have happened without this diocese's long-standing belief in the mission of God at 26th and Oak streets.

In addition to our investment at St. George's Center, the diocese partners in the transformation of lives at Aaron McNeil Center in Hopkinsville and Green River Ministries in Campbellsville. Aaron McNeil's building is falling down, and we're not sure where this ministry will continue. We're sure it will. The present location of the ministry used to be an Episcopal Church, an Episcopal Church for African American Episcopals.

It is also a fact that if the Episcopal Church had not chosen to do a mission in Campbellsville, the Green River Ministries' shelter for women would not exist. The Rev. Karl Lusk and a local task force made this happen, but when I did the dedication I was told, over and over again, particularly from faculty at the local Baptist college, that the community knows that it was the Episcopal Church that brought this new facility. We did not do it alone, but we got the ball rolling. This shelter is life changing, particularly for women who need it for refuge.

This diocese is committed to service because Christ commands it and our lives of service are testimony to the fruit of the Gospel.

There are showers of blessings this year. What will be next year's focus?

- We must complete the new chapel at St. Luke's.

- We must buy the land for a new mission in LaGrange and hire a missionary. The Trustees and Council just made that decision at its last meeting.

- On the Sunday that Betty Meadows, general presbyter of the Mid-Kentucky Presbytery, and I visited St. Andrew's, Glasgow, it was packed to the gills. It was claustrophobic. They cannot grow because of their building. We need to help them buy another church.

- We need a focused ministry to empower Episcopals under 35. I cannot imagine where this diocese would be without our second career Episcopal priests...people who have left lucrative careers and literally not only offered their lives but millions of dollars of unearned income, which was actually totaled up by the Society for the Increase of Ministry. It is staggering the amount that is represented in second career Episcopal priests. Every day I thank God for their service.

But I would like for the clergy under 35 to stand up, and I want the convention to look at these icons. They look a lot like the people that I don't see on my visitations to your congregation. The people of this generation do not seem to be in church in large numbers, and so we have these living icons of committed service under 35 as an intentional evangelical strategy to our diocese. And I thank God for all of our clergy, young and old.

- We will, as I said, do enhanced programming at All Saints' — a reading camp, a special needs camp.

With the blessings we have received and the vision we are being given, with St. Paul we pray fervently, "Glory to God whose power working in us can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine. Glory to Him from generation to generation, in the church and in Christ Jesus, forever and ever. Amen."