

## Ministry in Fort Worth extended

# Bishop reflects on dual episcopacies, General Convention

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In April, after the May issue of *Episcopal News* went to press, Bishop Ted Gulick received approval from the Diocese of Kentucky's Standing Committee to continue his part-time ministry in Fort Worth through November.

Bishop Gulick has been serving both dioceses since last February following his election at a special convention held in Fort Worth to reconstitute the diocese, whose former bishop and a majority of its deputies voted at its last convention in November 2008 to affiliate with the Anglican Province of the Southern Cone. Gulick had been recommended to the Fort Worth Episcopalians by Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori

after seeking the approval of Kentucky's Standing Committee. Originally, Gulick agreed to serve Fort Worth through the end of General Convention in July. Fort Worth,

and made the decision that we would support his continuing work there," Watson said. "It is our hope and expectation that he will be back full time in the Diocese of Kentucky after

seated next to each other and there are plans for them to caucus together at those times when they meet with the bishop, said the Rev. Libby Wade, chair of Kentucky's deputation.

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however, report it "has found his time with them to be so meaningful and powerful that they [Fort Worth's Standing Committee] would like to have him continue through their diocesan convention in November," said the Rev. Dr. Bill Watson, president of Kentucky's Standing Committee. "We met on April 14

that."

Commuting between the dioceses, the bishop spends blocks of 10-12 days in each place. To accommodate his dual episcopacies while at General Convention, he has arranged with the House of Deputies president Bonnie Anderson for each diocese's deputations to be

For the first time since February, Gulick has been available to sit for an in-depth interview, during which he not only talked about his ministry in Fort Worth but also answered questions about his expectations for

General Convention, which begins July 8, and about the bishop search underway in Kentucky. In response to a question about his role as a bishop of two dioceses at General Convention, the bishop noted that he would have two votes when considering elections, but only one vote on all other matters.

### How is the dual ministry going and commuting

The leadership of the Diocese of Fort Worth, many of the people who are now serving on the Standing Committee and the Executive Committee, are some of the ablest and most passionate lay people I've had the privilege of working with, and I am modeling for them a different way of being a bishop because I believe that ministry begins at the baptismal font, ... Part of what I find myself doing is giving them a theology for ministry. They're strong leaders. What they need is a theology of how their ministry relates to the mission of the church and to the ministry of the priests and the ministry of the bishop.

### They were not in leadership roles prior to the diocese's recent reformation?

Very few of them were. ... In the previous regime, there was such an attempt to have only people lead who shared certain very, very narrow understandings about, say, women in the church so that the leadership pool was actually pretty narrow, given the litmus tests that were required of any person who would exercise leadership. ... I'm doing more coaching than I've done in any time in my life. ... That is my theology of ministry. I think the bishop is primarily a servant coach along with being a teacher. That model seems to be welcome right now in Fort Worth.

I also believe that I am exercising my ministry as theologian among them, and that's turning out to be even more important than I think I realized initially.

The other thing I find myself doing is giving a theology for the intuition that many of them had for staying in the Episcopal Church. Some of them just intuited that it would be right to do it, and part of what I've been able to do to some extent is to get the theological rationale for the rightness of their intuition. So I've talked a lot about baptism and the Eucharist ... that we are profoundly stuck together by what God has done for us in baptism and that that's what constitutes the unity of the church rather than theological acquiescence to certain dogmatic pronouncements about women or about sexuality or any other issue in the church. ...

So I have actually found that visiting the parishes and the faith communities has been a kind of joy. I feel much like St. Paul must have felt sometimes. When I go to a place like Arlington, Texas, there are about 80 people gathered in the community theater to celebrate the Eucharist because they are literally locked out of their parish church and they're learning to be church in a new and vital way. This really

cool guy who runs the music store is sitting at an electronic piano, and he's flanked by a couple of people who are excellent guitarists. ... And we're having Eucharist with the set of the play that is going on in the theater as our background. Now this is all in a very Anglo-Catholic part of the Episcopal Church where they are used to beautiful gothic buildings, clouds of incense and classical Anglican music. ... They're all learning how to be the body of Christ without some of those other things that they love and value. ... They are a vital church, and they are forming a new way of being church, which is not to say it's not profoundly difficult for them. One of the women at that service, her husband's ashes are in the memorial garden of the church she can no longer attend...

**What's it been like having dual ministries?** My average workweek is 70 or 80 hours in both dioceses. I've got to get some handle on that. ... Also, I feel like I've really been under the gun ... since the accusation was made in Fort Worth that the presiding bishop has put the most revisionist bishop of the Episcopal Church there. I think people that know me, know that's not true. Everything I say, everything I write and everything I preach goes on the Web in Fort Worth. We're committed to transparency and committed to openness so I have to be very careful in my preparation.

The other thing that is happening is that I'm saying goodbye here at the same time I'm saying hello there ... The people in Fort Worth are saying, "This is our new bishop. Did you know he did this?" or "Did you see the way he includes feminine pronouns in his speaking?" They are very excited about the newness of the bishop of Fort Worth, and at the same time the people of Kentucky are saying goodbye to somebody that they've known for 15 years, and I'm saying goodbye to people I've known and loved for 15 years. ... I get on the plane and it's literally going into not only another part of the church, another job.... It's another emotional reality because one is about a very excited welcome and the other is about a protracted goodbye.

### Why are you staying until November?

I think we're at the point in the recovery of the [Fort Worth] diocese that to change leadership now would be a real distraction and a real interruption of the trajectory of renewal that we're on. ... They need to be recovering their vision about how to be the Episcopal Church. They don't need to be spending their energy on who the bishop is.

... It's been a good match because I think my

own theology is sufficiently evangelical and catholic that it meets the kind of high church, Fort Worth reality in a way that is okay. I also think that my own inclination towards an empowerment of others rather than the control of others has been a very, very welcome perspective for the church in Fort Worth right now. I don't think they're ready to quite let go of that right now, and I don't know if I'm ready to let go of them, if truth be known. It's been hard work, demanding work but in some ways it's some of the most important work that I've done. It reminds me a lot of the work in my first three or four years in Kentucky. In fact, a lot of what I intuitively know how to do in Fort Worth was taught here by the people of Kentucky. ...

### What do you expect from this General Convention? What will be the most important and the most challenging issues?

... I think we're going to have a very interesting conversation about what the Anglican Communion is and what it means, and whether we want Anglicanism to be a federation of similar churches or whether we want it to be more like one church.

### Will there be resolutions to that effect?

I think there will be some resolutions all around that, and some resolutions that on the surface don't look like they are about that will end being about that. For example, there will be resolutions about BO33, the decision we made towards the end of the last General Convention in 2006 ... which says that at this point ... it would be best for us to exercise restraint in not electing a person to the episcopate whose election would be divisive in the Communion. ... We entered into what the presiding bishop calls "gracious restraint," what St. Paul would call forbearance, where we have really laid a burden on gay and lesbian Episcopalians and asked them to forbear with the church in this moment in time around elections to the episcopate. ...

In many ways I think we are at a similar place to the Pauline church where Paul, writing to the Corinthians, asked them to refrain from eating the meat that was offered to the idol gods. I think the church has every canonical right to elect and confirm the election of any person lawfully elected as long as they profess the Christian faith. In fact, our canons specifically require that we not discriminate based on sexual orientation. So with this forbearance, we're in some ways setting aside our right for the good of holding the church together at a moment in time.

One of the questions that the church is going to deal with at this General Convention,

and ... at every General Convention until it is resolved, is, "How long is this forbearance going to last? How long can we keep saying to gay and lesbian people, 'You've come so far but not quite this far'?" The truth of the matter is Gene Robinson is an icon of the fact that the Episcopal Church is radically inclusive. However, we're asking that he be kind of a lonely icon for the moment [because] others were offended by what they felt was a decision that was taken without consultation and contrary to a previous decision that bishops had made.... I think we've tried with integrity to heal that perception and ... to be much more conscious of the effect of decisions we make ... on the wider communion. ...

### Will there be resolutions about the blessing of same sex unions in our churches? Yes.

### Where do you stand on these resolutions?

Right now, during this interview on May 6, 2009, without the benefit of hearing my brother and sister bishops and hearing the parameters of the debate in the House of Deputies—right now, I perceive in my own heart that if we move away from the commitment to gracious restraint, that movement will be perceived as premature by the rest of the Communion.

However, part of what happens when one goes to General Convention, is that you are impacted and affected, hopefully, by God's voice and the Holy Spirit speaking through others. I look forward to going in an open-hearted way and listening to the voices at General Convention.... It's a really difficult position to keep saying, "Wait." It's an exquisitely difficult position and I have some personal resonances with the argument, "Justice delayed is justice denied." As a matter of civil law, I personally believe that some sort of civil provision for civil unions is a matter of equal constitutional justice. That's where I am personally. However, I've also met brother bishops [from other parts of the Anglican Communion] who are passionately working for justice for young girls in situations where they will be the victims of kinds of sexual oppression that we can hardly imagine in the West. They are standing radically in support of girls and justice for women who are more likely to contract HIV illness due to forced sexual relationships ... and I want to strengthen and support their work. ...

This is a very, very charged and delicate moment in the Communion, and it's complex and complicated. I think that both on the right and the left, the rhetoric is simplistic, uninformed by reality and strident. What

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we have to do I think is listen to each other, tone down the rhetoric. ...

### **What other important matters will come before General Convention?**

I am going to be the co-chair of the Committee on Ecumenical Matters, and we're going to enter into – hopefully – a full communion relationship with the Moravians. The Moravians are an interesting group of Christians, ... They are one of the oldest of the Protestant churches ... They're a justice church... [and] they have a wonderful intellectual tradition. ...

The Archbishop of Canterbury will be there. This will be the first time he has visited a General Convention since becoming the archbishop, and that's an important moment for the Episcopal Church. ...

Of course we'll all be trying to figure out how to do the church's mission in this very, very troubling economy, and we'll be paying attention to how we best allocate resources.... I hope that we do some work on some of the trends that we have seen, some of which are worrying: those places in which the church is in decline... At the same time you worry about decline, however, you also have to study and be aware of the exceptions to that and why churches are growing and what the ingredients that lead to church growth are. ...

### **With the search for a new bishop in Kentucky now underway, what is it like for you sitting on the sidelines?**

I am so glad to be on the sidelines because this is not my discernment. ... You can't have done a job for 15 years without

a few regrets and without thinking "I wish I'd done this" or "I wish I'd have gotten this done." But the truth is, I'm so grateful for these 15 years. I am so proud of this diocese and I am so aware of its strengths that I am very, very calm about it. There are some things I want to get done. I want to look at some urban ministry issues in Louisville. I would like to be able to raise some more money for certain projects before I leave. ... I have got so much to do in Fort Worth and Kentucky.... I am very curious to see who the next bishop of Kentucky will be, and I hope she or he is a person who brings abilities and gifts that the diocese needs. ...

### **What pastoral advice do you give to others in the diocese watching from the sidelines?**

I think there is one piece of pastoral

advice. As we watch the situation in Northern Michigan, where they have elected a bishop that many bishops have not been able to support, I think the one ingredient in the mix that needs more attention than it has gotten so far is the question of what it means to be a bishop ... and what operative theology the bishop candidate brings. [*The recent election of a bishop in the Diocese of Northern Michigan has been challenged on several grounds, including his practice of Zen Buddhism.*] I think one of the reasons my ministry in Fort Worth is appreciated is my ministry as theologian. I think that's key right now.... Don't forget that the bishop is the chief theologian of the diocese.