

Bishop's Address to the 181st Convention of the Diocese of Kentucky

By the Rt. Rev. Edwin F. Gulick Jr.

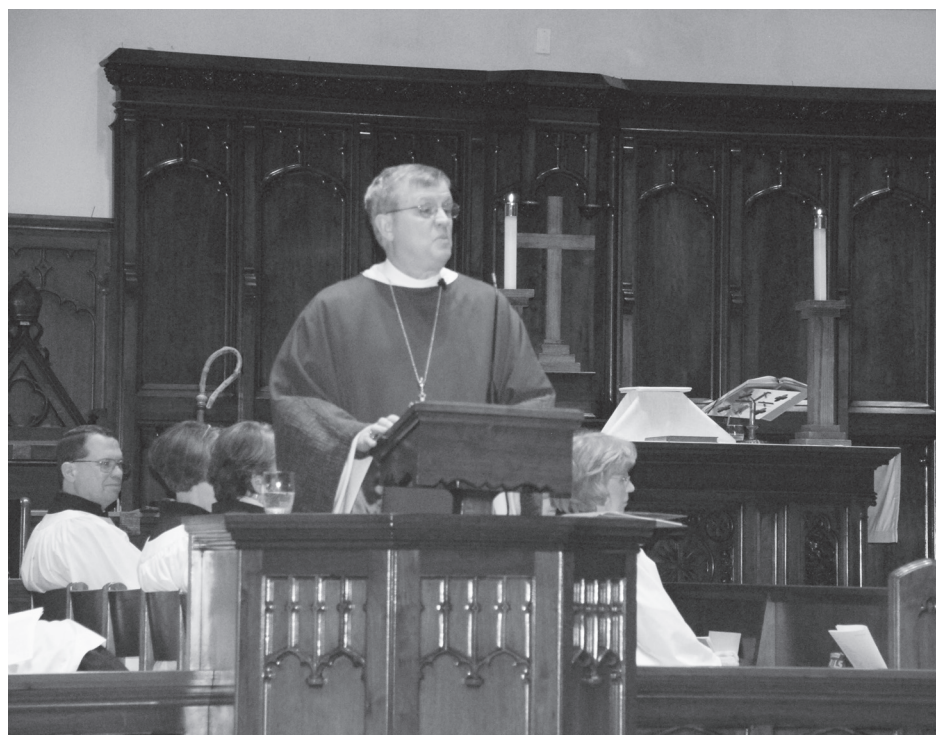
I want to begin by thanking three wonderful congregations in our diocese who have made sacrificial decisions related to today's convention. First of all I want to thank Christ Church Bowling Green for their amazing generosity in hosting this convention on such short notice. I want to thank Grace Church Paducah for all the work that went into the planning for a convention, only to see those plans set aside as a much larger task was thrust upon them as a result of the ice storm, and I want to thank the staff and parishioners of St. Matthew's Church for initiating a conversation with Grace Paducah in which they have willingly postponed their hosting of convention so that Grace Church can complete the plan to host convention next year. The amount of ministry the people of our western Kentucky congregations have had to do as a result of the storm is staggering, and I am so very proud of their response. We will do the business of the diocese today in a very focused format, but we will be ever grateful for the way servant ministry has been modeled by our congregations, knowing full well that the response is not over and support is still needed.

What are the major learnings?

1. Have a plan, including specifics about who is watching over the most vulnerable.
2. Have a functional, faith-based social service network.
3. Believe the weather report and make preparations (the storm did what the weather service said it would do!).

As I reflect on this past year of ministry, I begin by taking us back in time to the wonderful liturgy held under the big white tent at All Saints' on a beautiful day in May. This event, along with fantastic occasions at St. Matthew's, Grace Paducah, the cathedral, Resurrection and the [Episcopal] Church Home, marked our presiding bishop's visit. However, it was the tent meeting that was for me iconic of so many realities of this diocese and so many dimensions of what is best about the Episcopal Church. The service was vibrant with youth musicians and beautiful liturgical space that highlighted the two sacraments of baptism and Eucharist. The youngest among us were front and center and cared for on those beautiful Kentucky quilts in front of the altar. There were well prepared candidates for baptism and confirmation from all over our diocese, and nature itself cooperated as hawks circled the tent and deer grazed in the field. It was about awe, the gospel, effort, intimacy, diversity, claiming Jesus in a clear personal way as Jesus claimed us in a clear vivid way. The catholicity under that tent (you may recall that the baptismal candidates were from China via Grace Hopkinsville) made vivid and visible the truth that in Christ there is no East or West; it was one great fellowship of love – the love of Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit. I will never forget it!

Another glimpse of our diocese's mission can be seen in Byumba, Rwanda. This diocese raised over \$100,000 dollars in a recession through the Alleluia Fund effort to help Bishop Onesphore bring his dream of a health clinic into reality. This is a staggering sum for a diocese our size and in the profound season of economic hardship we find ourselves in. The walls and the roof are in place because of our efforts, coupled with generous donations from our other companion diocese in Glasgow and



On Feb. 28, Bishop Ted Gulick delivered his "state of the diocese" address in place of the homily at the Eucharist opening this year's convention in order to accommodate the one-day agenda. The story, results of diocesan elections and more photos may be found on pages 1k, 4k-5k. Photo by Mary Jane Cherry

Galloway in Scotland and the sweat equity of many helping hands in Byumba. Although we have made a good start, more funds are needed to finish construction so that the dream can come true. If you have not yet begun to support the Alleluia Fund effort, our Christian Formation Commission will be glad to head you in the right direction. This year's offering will continue our efforts to get this clinic up and running.

At the time that I had to write this address, for the first time since I have been bishop, not all of the parochial reports had arrived so that my usual analysis is not complete; however, I think confirmations, baptisms of adults and receptions are up this year. Let me lend you my eyes and describe just one confirmation. The candidate was a high school student, the only confirmation at my visitation at Trinity Fulton. He had been baptized in that parish as an infant, his parents no longer attended but something drew him to walk back home. He brought about six of his high school buddies with him, the congregation surrounded him, the parish in Paducah provides him a youth group and program of excellence, and our diocese helps support Trinity Fulton's mission. We all had a part in that moment because diocese is the sacrament of our interdependence.

Since the last convention, our diocese has sent away our first overseas missionary. Cortney Dale, raised here in Christ Church, product of All Saints' Camp and Conference Center, recipient of our commitment to have university chaplains in places like U of L, who extend that mission to students at other colleges in the area. She is serving the Anglican Church in South Africa. We are so proud of her as we are proud of the work her contemporary Brandon Brones does as youth minister at St. Matthew's Louisville; proud of the ministry P'tricia Egbert does as the administrator of our cathedral; proud of the ministry of Kendall Badgett, who directs youth ministry at St. Luke's Anchorage; proud of the ministry of Matt Yeager at Grace Paducah; and proud of the ministry of our four All Saints'

staff alums who are now our priests and, in order of seniority, are Ben Mass (mostly a Chanco guy, but did have a summer at All Saints' before seminary), Jim Trimble, Amy Coultas and Matt Bradley. All of these young Christians and others, who serve as architects, school principals and physicians, have benefited from strong parishes, but we all own a part of their vocation because they were also formed in a strong diocesan youth ministry. And many of them were well served by our chaplains at our major universities. The trend continues since we have two young men, both named Ben, in early stages of discernment for the priesthood. The common thread in both of them is strong camp and strong campus ministry.

I was awestruck when I attended the first retreat for Episcopalians under 30 something held at All Saints' this past spring. The depth and wisdom of these young adults was staggering and I was so proud of Ellen Ekevag, Amy Coultas and Matt Bradley, who led this event. Because we see such fruit, because we are known for the vitality of our young adults both ordained and lay, we received a [\$56,000] grant from the church center in New York to have a canon evangelist for young adults ministry in the Louisville area, where we estimate that upwards of 100,000 young adults are without any faith community. The Rev. Amy Coultas will assume this ministry with some diocesan support, some support from our cathedral and this amazing, two-year grant from the national church. This ministry was born in a conversation among the Wednesday clergy coffee group in Louisville, and I am so moved that the Episcopal Church trusts us with such an opportunity.

Another glimpse – another experience of lending my eyes – has to do with the transformation we are experiencing as this diocese is becoming much more diverse as we receive two new communities of Asian Christians among us. Last spring a group of Korean Christians, former members of an Assembly of God church came to my office with their former pastor, now an Episcopal

priest. They were interested in learning more about the Episcopal Church, and after an initial meeting they and I received support and encouragement from a Korean Episcopal congregation in Nashville. Fr. Barnabas Lee, an Anglican priest and a recent immigrant to this country, became involved with this work and has now moved to Kentucky and, with the support of Christ Church Elizabethtown, has established the congregation of the Holy Spirit. We just baptized and confirmed a very well prepared core membership of the congregation, and Fr. Barnabas has also helped us supply in some of our local congregations. This is very exciting, but just as amazing is the community of the Karen people that now make up half of the worshipping community at Church of the Resurrection. Fleeing persecution in Burma (Myanmar), they are already Anglicans (with a few Baptists scattered among them) and were primarily farmers and workers in agriculturally related industry. Deacon Delinda Buie and Fr. Jerry Cappel have begun to work with this community, which on many Sundays approaches 50. It is one thing to mouth the words, "I believe in the Holy Catholic Church"; it is quite another to welcome, support and incorporate them into our life.

These wise ones from the East were not a part of us a year ago, but their devotion, perseverance and intentional practice of prayer, Bible study and feasting in community are already impacting us in inspiring ways.

I think I am both sensitive to the gift of our new sisters and brothers and deeply appreciative of these gifts as a result of having been at last year's Lambeth Conference. I had the great joy of being a Bible study leader for a group of eight bishops, and I was also asked to be both a press spokesperson as well as a presenter at a forum on Anglican and Roman Catholic relations, based on the International Anglican Roman Catholic Commission on Unity and Mission on which I have served. Barbara was also asked to lead a spouse Bible study so we were both a bit busier than some others. The level of commitment, devotion and willingness to listen with undefended hearts was my experience of this conference. I found it a profound, though definitely challenging, experience and I so thank you for the financial support that made it possible to attend. It is awe inspiring to learn how converted to Jesus, resourceful and passionate about justice our communion really is. The work that is being done to protect, educate and empower girls and women in places like India, Pakistan and Africa is awe inspiring. Despite what you might have heard, the Anglican Communion is deeply committed to a unity in Jesus Christ and has engaged in a profound post-colonial dialogue about the nature of communion and church in its local and universal realities. I have so enjoyed the occasions when I have been invited to speak in our congregations and would welcome more opportunities.

Other concerns: This year's diocesan budget process was stretching and demanding. Our investments are down nearly 21 percent; by comparison, Virginia seminary has sustained a loss of 34 percent. Last year in 2008, our parochial giving to the diocese increased nine percent; this year, despite some real sacrifices (I know of one congregation that let go of two staff in order to commit their fair share to the

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diocese), we have sustained a three percent decline. Fortunately, Don Kohler, Becky Meyer and I saw this reality approaching and we were able to end fiscal year 2008 with about \$80,000 in unused funds. Since the budget has been submitted (according to our canonically mandated timeline), it has now become clear that Trustees and Council will have more resources – amazingly more than we thought. The Diocese of Fort Worth will reimburse Kentucky 50 percent of the cost of my salary, housing and pension during my service as provisional bishop of Fort Worth.

Since I will serve six months, this will bring in a bit over \$40,000 to the budget. This past Shrove Tuesday, a benefactor of our diocese invited me to coffee and Sally Brown gave an undesignated gift to our diocese of \$200,000 to be used at my discretion. She mentioned All Saints'; I mentioned property in LaGrange (my discretion will be shared with Trustees and Council). She said that she loves her church and that people with resources should share them especially in this difficult time. She gave me permission to announce this and to remind all owners of Brown Forman Stock that they all just received a generous dividend. ... I

[also] learned we had also received another gift of \$5,000 for the diocese – again, to be used as the bishop feels appropriate. I was just with a bishop of another diocese this past week whose voice broke as he told me he would have to trim \$1.5 million from a \$3 million budget. I don't know why God has taken that burden off our shoulders at this time. We have been generous to Rwanda, we do support the mission of our Episcopal church fully, we have cast our bread upon the waters; it has been returned. God must want this diocese to choose the next leader from a position of strength!

In addition to these amazing gifts, our diocese received an emergency grant of \$10,000 from Episcopal Relief and Development, and Episcopalians in Fort Worth have contributed well over \$3,000 to help the relief effort.

Many of your congregations have sacrificed in many ways and that is the main reason our funds are adequate for the missional need.

It is evident that the recession is having an impact on our life. Several congregations have moved from full-time to part-time clergy. Although this in some sense reflects the fact

that we subsidized some of these salaries through the Brennan grants for the newly ordained, I am concerned that Resurrection, Advent, Our Merciful Savior, Ascension Bardstown and St. Thomas Campbellsville are no longer full-time cures. I am planning to convene a meeting of all congregations served by clergy who work on a part-time basis to vision ways of consolidating efforts, discovering best practices, and perhaps re-aligning and re-configuring ministry so that these vital faith communities do not lapse into maintenance.

Finally: When Peter Smith of *The Courier-Journal* wrote about my plan to relocate to Virginia next year he mentioned family realities but he also mentioned the significant struggle over the General Convention of

2003. First let me quote my wife of almost 39 years: "Ted, you will never be ready to leave the clergy and people of Kentucky." The reason we are returning is not strife – and most of you know that. The reasons are elderly parents (Dad totaled his car last week) and grandchildren (one of whom was in intensive care this week. She is home and fine at present, thanks in part to your prayers). So we must embrace those realities. But know that I am vitally committed to this place and will give it my best and believe with all my heart that my successor will be called to an amazing, creative, generous, Christ-centered diocese, where the ministry of bishop – on most days – is pure joy and always a divine trust and privilege. Let us Bless the Lord! Amen

All Saints' new director begins

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The ice storm brought an additional challenge for the new director, as he will be overseeing the cleanup of extensive tree damage as well as the main challenges that brought him to All Saints': overseeing restoration of the old facilities and finding ways to keep the new facilities booked with satisfied guests.

Premo, who has already retired at least three times, and his wife, Polly, have been involved in the hospitality business most of their adult lives, first as the owner-operator of a motel and restaurant. Premo has also been executive director of Episcopal camp and conference centers in Vermont and North Carolina. Upon the recommendation of the Rev. Larry Handwerk, who just retired as All Saints' executive director, the All Saints' search committee found Greg in North Carolina, where he had retired that year as the director of Trinity Center.

Running a successful camp and conference center, Premo says, "is more than just a question of the occupancy rate." He listed dozens of things he needs to do or to learn as quickly as possible in order to be ready for camp season and beyond. "What kind of food do people in Kentucky like?" he asked, wisely realizing that food tastes differ from Vermont to North Carolina to Kentucky. "We need to find 'cooks,' not 'chefs' in the Leitchfield area who will work the kind of spotty schedule we can offer." He identified at least two other important questions: "How do we integrate adults and young people when the entire facility is full?" and "How can I provide an appropriate foundation for the camp director to build her programs on?"

He will not be doing this alone, however, because Polly plans to assist him as a consultant for the center's food preparation and presentation.

Clearly seeing his work as an important ministry, Premo is rapidly sorting through ideas of ways to welcome members of other faith groups (denominations and faiths), educational organizations, arts groups, sports teams and others to All Saints'. He hopes to get the word out that this expanded and attractive center is open to many groups beyond Episcopal



vestries, youth groups and committees. And he's hoping that all members of the diocese will consider using All Saints' as a locale for family gatherings while also telling their friends and neighbors about the beauty and convenience of the site.

Built some 50 years ago, All Saints' has been transformed under the leadership of Bishop Ted Gulick, and with construction of the new lodge and inn All Saints' is ready for twenty-first century programming. At least until a new bishop is called, its board of directors and the new interim director plan to work together to make the center a place for spiritual growth and renewal for Kentuckians of all ages and beliefs.

"I don't know how long I'll be here," Premo said in summing up his own vision of the ministry he is beginning with us. "I bring whatever skills I have and plan to use them as a team player to work in every way with the departments and parishes of the diocese."

Praising Handwerk, who delayed his retirement in order to be on hand to help with the transition, Premo added that "Larry Handwerk has set the stage, and now I'm stepping on it, hoping to create an atmosphere that will enable the program people to accomplish what they want to get done."

In Memoriam: Brad Ableson

The Rev. Dr. Bradford E. Ableson, a U.S. Navy captain ordained an Episcopal priest by Bishop Ted Gulick, died Feb. 17 following a long illness. His funeral service was held Feb. 21 at Trinity Episcopal Cathedral, Omaha, where he had been priest-in-residence since his ordination in 2006.

Ableson, command chaplain for the U.S. Strategic Command in Omaha, Neb., since 2004, was introduced to Gulick by the diocese's then canon to the ordinary, the Rev. Dr. Jay Magness, a retired Navy captain who had been Ableson's mentor in the chaplains corps and had known Ableson's longtime desire to become an Episcopal priest.

In an interview in 2006, Ableson said that he had attended the Episcopal Seminary of the Southwest for one year in 1983 but discontinued his candidacy for the priesthood and eventually became a Presbyterian minister. He joined the Navy in 1985, first serving as a reservist and going on active duty two years later.

Ableson had a distinguished military career, and he was known for having reformed the American military chaplaincy, according to an online news story by Frank Brown, assistant director of publications at the Yale Divinity School. In addition to serving during the Iran-Iraq War and then the Persian Gulf War, he was the head chaplain aboard the USS George Washington aircraft carrier before and during the ongoing Iraq War, Brown reported. Ableson also served for three years as the chaplain at Camp David, during the Bill Clinton administration, providing pastoral care to the president, his family and support staff at the Maryland retreat.

"Ableson was the primary architect behind one of the most significant shifts in the history of American military

chaplaincy: the transformation of the chaplaincy from an institution focused almost wholly on the pastoral needs of personnel to one that embraces senior chaplains as agents of reconciliation with religious leaders around the globe," wrote Brown.

Asked by Ableson to give the funeral homily, Bishop Gulick said of Ableson: "This man was 'Type A' to the max! Driven, razor sharp intellect, a shooting star." He noted that although he felt a strong, intellectual and "soul to soul" affinity with Ableson upon meeting him, "there was this urgency about being an Episcopal priest that I did not fully understand until I observed his incredible sacramental living in the midst of dying. I understood it only in the last months of his life." Speaking to a congregation filled with his military colleagues, friends and family, Gulick continued: "Some of you will be shocked to hear me recount this statement he once said to me: 'If becoming an Episcopal priest will require my leaving the Navy, I will do it!' All of you who were his colleagues in the Navy know how much he loved the United States Navy. Fortunately, to exact that sacrifice never occurred to me or to anyone else in our Commission on Ministry."

Recalling a conversation they had in December, Gulick said that underneath all that Ableson was and did, he was a mystic. "Ever since his ordination day in this very sacred space, presiding at the altar of God was Brad's joy and gladness.... In fact he told me, 'When I hold the chalice, I feel that I am drinking Jesus' death and he is drinking my death; that he and I together are not letting the cup pass and I know that I am drinking in his life and he is drinking in my life.'"