

The Bishop's Address to Convention

The Episcopal Diocese of Hawai'i



Delivered at the 51st Annual Meeting of the Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Hawai'i

October 26, 2019

A reading from Paul's Second letter to the Corinthians (5:13-20a):

If we are crazy, it's for God's sake. If we are rational, it's for your sake. The love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: one died for the sake of all; therefore, all died. He died for the sake of all so that those who are alive should live not for themselves but for the one who died for them and was raised. So then, from this point on we won't recognize people by human standards. Even though we used to know Christ by human standards, that isn't how we know him now. So then, if anyone is in Christ, that person is part of the new creation. The old things have gone away, and look, new things have arrived! All of these new things are from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and who gave us the ministry of reconciliation. In other words, God was reconciling the world to himself through Christ, by not counting people's sins against them. He has trusted us with this message of reconciliation. So we are ambassadors who represent Christ.

Let us pray.

O God, you entered the pain of our humanity in Christ Jesus, in whom you are reconciling the world to yourself: Bend our wills, we pray, to rely on your reconciling presence in the resentments and enmities we suffer in families, communities, churches, nations – and in our own hearts. Nourish our confidence that in your compassion all our wounds are vulnerable to healing. Build our courage to address broken relationships with those from whom we are alienated. Deepen our capacity to listen, repent and forgive. As we journey toward your wholeness, form us in the ministry of reconciliation you have entrusted to us, that others may hear your appeal to be reconciled with God, with their neighbors and with all of creation through the cross and resurrection of our friend and savior, Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

(based on prayer by Titus Pressler)

Being called to the ministry of reconciliation is a remarkable gift. It is core to our Baptismal promises. Knowing God in the Trinity – the Creedal promises of the Baptismal Covenant -- forces us to see all creation as a dynamic relationship. It is the Biblical narrative and Trinitarian faith behind the Great Creeds that then lead us into action:

- Continuing in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers.
- Persevering in resisting evil, and, whenever we fall into sin, repenting and returning to the Lord.
- Proclaiming by word and example the Good News of God in Christ.
- Seeking and serving Christ in all persons, loving our neighbors as ourselves.

- Striving for justice and peace among all people, and respecting the dignity of every human being.

The Baptismal Covenant and the related Creeds aren't perfect. They are historically conditioned and must be re-interrupted. But they provide the basis of our relational, incarnational and dynamic Christian faith that is grounded in the goodness of creation, the possibility of human reconciliation and wholeness, and an unwavering hope in the reality of God's love.

I live in that faith. I only know God through Jesus. It gives meaning to my life – to our common life as a Diocese. It is that faith that binds us together here today. It is the faith we are called to share.

Our life begins with relationships. As Christians, we believe apart from Christ, no human being is the greatest, or the wisest, or indispensable. No one made it on their own. There is no such thing as the self-made person. We are interdependent on one another and with all of creation.

As has been the case for nearly 34 years of ordained ministry in the Episcopal Church and almost 39 years of marriage, Bea has been my support and my love.

Aside from my primary relationship with Bea, I spend much of my time with those in the Diocesan Support Center. You need to know that the staff serves you with dedication and love. This past year has seen both a return to full working order and a renewed joy. Peter is fully back after his illness. Danny and Rae have taken up a range of administrative and business duties. Sonny is in the backroom working away. Norma is a tireless volunteer. Sybil is on top of electronic news from Kaua'i. Sandy is fully the Canon – able to read the Bishop's mind and anticipate the odd turns in congregations. Lastly, Denise has seamlessly joined us bringing renewed joy and genuine concern for other people while trying to master the Bishop's calendar. I am – we are – blessed by our team.

There are volunteers upon whom we depend. Our Chancellor, Wayne Yoshigai, gives many hours of legal service and wise advice – all for a lunch with me once a month. Stuart Ching watches over our archives with insufficient space and support. Stuart, I apologize. Frank and Norma Chun have faithfully served as chaplains to retired clergy – in 2020, they look to pass those duties on to Alison Dingley and Willis Moore. Steve Costa is the ever faithful non-stipendiary Archdeacon.

We also have wonderful elected leaders. The Standing Committee has taken on some difficult assignments. In 2019, they reviewed our Constitution and Canons for consistency. It was actually a major undertaking. They are presenting their amendments at this Annual Meeting. In 2020, they will work with the Chancellor on the Safe Church guidelines and the Title IV process. I would like to thank Phyllis Chang for her service on Standing Committee as her term ends.

Diocesan Council is the Board of Directors of the Corporation: The Episcopal Church in Hawai'i. We – as Bishop I am the President of Council – are responsible for the finances and property of

the Diocese. Peter Lee, Louise Aloy, Bruce DeGooyer and Andrew McMullen are all rotating off Diocesan Council. Thank you for your service.

This is my thirteenth Convention as your Bishop. Following the performance review and our major mutual ministry review in 2018, I hope to continue – God willing – for some years to come. I am realistic that I turned 61 at my birthday last month. Considering all things, I hope that the next Bishop will be elected sometime after my 67th birthday in September 2025. I tell you this so we can plan together. This is a hope and a very human plan, and not an announcement or a pronouncement. I will continue to listen to the Standing Committee and to you. Some years ago, a book was published entitled The Elephant in the Boardroom: Speaking the Unspoken about Pastoral Transitions by Carolyn Weese and Russell Crabtree. In it, the authors suggest that churches – locally and at the Diocesan level -- think through the systemic things needed for transitions. They suggest that we are always preparing for our successors.

My ministry with you has already had two major shifts. Soon after my ordination as Bishop, we faced the Great Recession of 2007-2008. In practical terms, we responded by lowering the Diocesan assessment on congregations consistently year after year. The result was that financial support for Mission congregations declined and the size of staff in the office of the Bishop was reduced. Like you in secular business, we did – we do – more with less. We tried to share ministry more often. More congregations moved to part salaried or non-stipendiary clergy support. We also expanded ministries and celebrated with Disciples Journey 2009 at Turtle Bay. As we came out of the crisis and marked a transition, we celebrated our sesquicentennial as the Church in the Hawaiian Islands in 2012. The Presiding Bishop, the Most Reverend Katharine Jefferts Schori, joined us on the Square for the celebration.

The second phase of our life together saw the revitalization of local ordained ministry. Marked by sending local candidates for ordination to seminaries in North America and the creation of the local training program, Waiolaihui'ia. We have raised up and ordained more local priests and deacons than at any time since Bishop Kennedy's 25-year tenure as Bishop. With the arrival of Sandy as Canon, we expanded our programming and support for clergy and congregations. Unfortunately, unlike the first six years of my episcopate, this period included the demographic shift as our oldest members passed away. Unlike those earlier years, our average Sunday attendance declined. On the whole, folk were not leaving angry or over the great theological disputes of previous years, no, our sisters and brothers died or moved to North America to be near family or because of a lower cost of living. Some of the historically stronger congregations – especially on Oahu – declined as others – especially on neighbor islands – have grown, some significantly. This phase of our life, I think, concluded with the major Diocesan self-study, Mutual Ministry Review and Bishop's Professional Performance Review in 2017 and 2018. As I outlined in my written report to Convention, that is shaping our course for the future.

Not all has gone as I had hoped. I thought the Cluett Apartments here on the Square would be torn down by now. I thought we would be further along in property development than we are as a Diocese. The failure to gain support from the elected leadership for the St. Mary's development project and the sale of a property next to St. Christopher's was a disappointment to me. It was a living reminder that basic to our polity is that decisions about property and

finances are made by elected leaders at different levels of governance and that we are not congregationalists. We have to find consensus. That said, we also have to be more agile in development and better stewards of our property. Idle and unused property and buildings do nothing to further the mission of God's Church or serve God's people. We have property development task group reports, we have guidelines for property development from Standing Committee, and we have a proposed plan for organization from an attorney. In 2020, it will require action of the Bishop and the Diocesan Council to allow real action and development. It also requires the courage to fail. If a Vestry is ready to act at the Parish level or if the Diocese is ready to act with an Organized Mission, we need to respond supportively and with all due haste.

I also must admit that I have held on to some things for too long. In 2020, St. Nicholas, Kapolei, will become a Preaching Station and that congregation will no longer receive a subsidy. I will ask the Council to forgive the Diocesan loan to St. John the Baptist, Mā'ili. This will give that congregation some financial independence with rental income, but no subsidy. The entity called the Episcopal Church in West Oahu will disappear. I have asked Mark Haworth to take on the task of developing new communities of faith – perhaps congregations – in the area between Ewa Beach and Ko Olina on Oahu. We will provide the needed training. This will be a whole new ministry with no connection to the old St. Barnabas or the continuing St. Nicholas. I don't know if a building will ever be built on the Diocesan land in Kapolei. I don't know what the future will hold. I do know that the population of the area and its growth potential makes this an import mission opportunity. It does demand a new beginning and fresh ideas. Please pray for the ongoing congregations and for this new adventure in mission.

As I noted in my written report, the Design Teams and Task Groups have taken up their work. They have moved along. Be sure to read their reports in the "Workbook." The work of these teams (and others like them) will be very important over the next few years. These teams will help shape our future.

The Worship Task Group has produced very good guidelines for trial and experimental liturgies. This is in response to actions of General Convention. I hope your congregations have used the Canadian version of our BCP's Eucharistic Prayer C. We used it for the Convention Eucharist last night. I hope you will share your insights and opinions. Careful and engaged liturgical experimentation is welcome following the Task Group's guidelines and with careful evaluation. This is preparing the Episcopal Church for a revision of the Book of Common Prayer in the years ahead. The Worship Task Group has done us an outstanding service.

Let me note that the work of the Reconciliation Task Group is looking to bring Heidi Kim to help us. The issues of racism and sexism are deeply imbedded in culture and life. I need to remind this Convention that last year a resolution entitled "Taking a Stand Against Abuse in All its Forms" was referred to Standing Committee. They have asked me to report that they have taken no action on it. They asked this Task Group to consider the resolution's intent as they continue their work.

I am particularly impassioned about the work of the Creation Care Task Group. We must not only learn and change our behavior, we must champion changes in behavior and policy in our

community and nation. This will, I think, include engaging a carbon tracker at the congregational level and budgeting for carbon offsets here in the Diocese. We are not mere stewards of creation, humanity is part of creation, and we – you and I – are morally responsible for the damage we have done to the earth, our island home.

I have asked the Native Hawaiian Ministry Committee to help us gather liturgical materials and to help make ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i a common part of our life together. With the deaths of Tom Van Culin and Malcolm Naea Chun, a generation of kanaka maoli clergy has passed. We have a rising new generation of leaders, but your help is needed to identify and raise up others.

The Spiritual Growth Design Team is helping us answer the cry from lay people regarding growing in their faith, learning to pray and exploring the Bible. This is, in fact, our most important work over the next few years. As we learned from RenewalWorks research – thank you Jay – 72% of Episcopalians “consider themselves to be at an early, less mature stage of spiritual growth.” This reflects exactly the cry of our Diocese when we did the Mutual Ministry Review in 2018. This group looks to the clergy to help teach, guide and mentor them in the faith. The planned revival weekends – by whatever name they might end up with – are part of this ministry. Likewise, the Diocese has contracted with Forward Movement to bring Revive to every congregation and to our Diocesan leadership. Revive is about discipleship. This is a small-group discipleship program for active lay leaders to help them grow in confidence as spiritual leaders who love God and want to live a Jesus-shaped life. Ministry in the church is demanding and difficult. Revive is offered as a gift to our dedicated lay leaders to give them the chance to be re-energized with some new ideas and lots of laughter and to learn about themselves and the God we serve. Lay leaders join their minister in a safe setting, where they find words to describe their spiritual experiences and grow in intimacy with God as a follower of Christ. We are participating in this resource as a Diocese. Revive is about you – the leaders of the Diocese of Hawai‘i. Added to this are insights and materials from Jay and RenewalWorks. The Presiding Bishop’s Office is providing a multiple resource on the “Way of Love.” In fact, there are more programs and opportunities for spiritual growth and formation available in the Episcopal Church now than I have ever known.

The purpose of these resources is so we can articulate our faith and share it with others. I was delighted to see the excitement at the “Invite/Welcome/Connect” gathering in early September.

Such programs are not magical answers to congregational revitalization. They are tools for that work. The effectiveness is entirely dependent on our engagement and commitment.

I consider the next phase of our life as a Diocese as having begun with Renewal 2019 this past March. The Presiding Bishop offered us – and the entire Episcopal Church – an engaged and lively faith. We are not afraid to say “Jesus”! We are about being proud Episcopalians – celebrating our faith, our style of worship and our theology. We are inclusive.

So, what does it mean for you – for us? We have to commit ourselves to using the tools we now have. As a Diocese, we have to raise up more leaders: lay and ordained. The work of the

past few years has just begun, but we have not reached a critical mass. I am particularly focused on the ministry of vocational Deacons – the witness to serve those in need.

As the clergy and delegates of this Convention – as the leaders of this Diocese – I urge you to take part in Revive as it is offered in your congregation over the next couple of years. In the short term, I would like you and every adult member of the congregation to go through confirmation class in 2020.

Yes, I'm serious. How can we share our faith – our Church – if we don't know what we're sharing? I would like us together to take nineteen session pilgrimage in 2020 and work through *Faith Confirmed: Preparing for Confirmation* by Peter Jackson and Chris Wright (the North American edition published by Forward Movement, 2019). It reminds me of Claude DuTeil's "Short Course in Christianity" that formed so many in this Diocese in the last century. With this I would hope every adult member of Diocese would have a personal copy of the Book of Common Prayer and of the Bible (I suggest the Common English Bible translation). This project could be taken up on a Sunday morning in a class or on weeknights in small groups. We have to understand our common heritage and the basics of our faith. As leaders, it starts with you. My hope – my dream – is that every active adult member of the Episcopal Church in Hawai'i will be presented to me as Bishop for Reaffirmation (or Confirmation if it has not happened before) in 2020. If your congregation is struggling or individuals can't buy the books themselves, I will find a way to help. With *Faith Confirmed* (and a Prayer Book and a Bible) and the Presiding Bishop's "Way of Love" videos and resources, I think we can gain confidence in what it means to be an Episcopalian – our particular Branch of the Jesus Movement. Will you join me on this adventure in 2020?

I will commit myself to the formation and support of clergy and lay leaders in this next phase of our life together. I am ever more certain that the world – that Hawai'i -- needs the Episcopal Church now, in 2020 and beyond. We have to be able to share our faith and our excitement. We regularly hear the Bible stories – they are the stories of our ancestors. We are not Biblical literalists. We delight in science. We welcome the insights and teaching of our indigenous kupuna. We are not afraid of disagreement. We know that in God's love there are no outcasts. We love Jesus. We must be prepared to actively and personally share our faith so others can find a place at God's table. We need not be afraid.

As Paul said, "All of these new things are from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and who gave us the ministry of reconciliation. In other words, God was reconciling the world to himself through Christ, by not counting people's sins against them. He has trusted us with this message of reconciliation. So we are ambassadors who represent Christ."

Please know, Jesus loves you and I love you. Thank you for allowing me to be your Bishop.

Aloha.