

**The 142<sup>nd</sup> Annual Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Albany**  
**Bishop's Address**  
**By**  
**The Right Reverend William H. Love**

Dear Friends in Christ – Welcome! The 142<sup>nd</sup> Annual Convention of the Diocese of Albany will now come to order. Let us pray:

Almighty and ever living God, source of all wisdom and understanding, be present with all those who take counsel at this 142<sup>nd</sup> Annual Convention of the Diocese of Albany, for the renewal and mission of your Church. Gracious Father, we pray for thy holy Catholic Church. Fill it with all truth, in all truth with all peace. Where it is corrupt, purify it; where it is in error, direct it; where in any thing it is amiss, reform it. Where it is right, strengthen it; where it is in want, provide for it; where it is divided, reunite it. Teach us in all things to seek first your honor and glory. Guide us to perceive what is right, and grant us both the courage to pursue it and the grace to accomplish it. Grant that Your Word may be truly preached and truly heard, Your Sacraments faithfully administered and faithfully received. By Your Holy Spirit, fashion our lives according to the example of your Son, and grant that we may show the power of your love to all among whom we live. Inspire our witness to your Son, our Lord, Jesus Christ, that all may know the power of His forgiveness and the hope of His resurrection, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen. (BCP pp 816-818)

I greatly appreciate and want to thank everyone here this evening for the sacrificial giving of your time and resources to come to Convention, representing your parishes and the Diocese. I trust and pray that the Convention and accompanying Youth Rally will not only be a blessing to each of us, young and old alike, but most especially that it will glorify God and help build His Kingdom.

For 142 years the people of the Diocese of Albany have been coming together as brothers and sisters in Christ to worship and serve our Lord Jesus Christ; to be fed and nourished by His Word and sacraments; and to enjoy one another's fellowship, supporting and upholding each other in our common mission and to carry out the work of the Church. It is for those same reasons that we come here this weekend. The theme of this year's convention, "Take Up Your Cross and Follow Me" is taken from Matthew

16:14. I pray that our Lord's call to follow Him, submitting to His Lordship will guide us in all that we do these next three days and each day of the rest of our lives.

As always, one of the great blessings of Convention is the opportunity to meet and visit with friends and brothers and sisters in Christ from around the Diocese as well as from the wider Anglican Communion. This year we are blessed and honored to have with us for the first time, The Most Reverend Drexel Gomez and his wife Carroll. Archbishop Gomez is the recently retired Archbishop and Primate of the Province of the West Indies and Bishop of the Bahamas and the Turks and Caicos Islands. Involved in the writing and publication of the Windsor Report in 2004, and later, appointed as the Chair of the Covenant Design Group which produced the Anglican Communion Covenant, he has contributed significantly to the life and ministry of the Anglican Communion in recent years. I have invited Archbishop Gomez to address the Convention tomorrow morning during the Plenary Session, sharing his thoughts and insight into the Anglican Communion Covenant. In addition, he will be leading a workshop tomorrow afternoon designed as a question and answer session, giving you an opportunity to meet and visit with him. Sunday morning, Archbishop Gomez will be the preacher at the Youth Mass. Each time I have heard the Archbishop speak, I left informed, inspired and greatly blessed. Please join me in officially welcoming Archbishop and Mrs. Gomez to the Diocese of Albany.

Our second guest speaker this weekend is someone that we just recently welcomed to the Diocese, but will soon be saying good-bye to. Fr. Mike Chapman accompanied by his wife Linda, has been serving as the Interim Rector at St. John's, Troy, but will be leaving at the end of this month to move to Peru where he has been elected as Bishop Suffragan. I first met the Chapman's in 1988 when Fr. Mike and I were seminarians at Nashotah House. Prior to coming to Troy as Interim Rector at St. John's, Fr. Mike and Linda ran The Holy Way Ministry in North Carolina in addition to being heavily involved in Christian healing ministry and short-term missions throughout the world. I have asked Fr. Chapman to preach at Morning Prayer tomorrow and to be part of the Prayer Team at the Saturday Evening Healing Service, in addition to leading a couple of workshops. Mike and Linda, we have been blessed by your presence in the Diocese and are honored to have you with us this weekend.

Joining us at Diocesan Convention for the first time last year, and back again this year, we are honored to have The Rev. Patsy McGregor, wife of the Rt. Rev. Todd McGregor, Bishop of Toliara, Madagascar, with us. Over the last few weeks, the McGregors have been visiting several parishes throughout the Diocese, sharing the ministry the Lord has called them to in Madagascar. Unfortunately, Bishop Todd could not stay for Convention. Patsy has just recently completed her newest book, entitled The Detour – An Off-Road Safari. If anyone is interested in buying an autographed copy, I believe she might have one or two extra copies with her. She will be leading two workshops this weekend. Patsy – Welcome Back!

This seems to be the year for Missionary Visitors. Joining us fresh from the mission field in Peru, are The Rev. Ian Montgomery and his wife Polly. They have been working with our own missionaries to Peru, Fr. Shaw and Mother Julie Mudge and their daughter Lydia (who we are also blessed to have with us this weekend). The Montgomerys will be leading a workshop entitled: “Jubilee Ministry – Using Retirement on the Mission Field.” To both the Montgomerys and the Mudges – Welcome!

Our very dear friend, Liz Miller, wife of Bishop Harold Miller from our sister Diocese of Down and Dromore, in Northern Ireland was scheduled to be with us (along with Rosemary Rudd) for the recent Clergy Wives’ Retreat, but due to the volcanic cloud hovering over the Atlantic airways, she and Rosemary decided to come to Convention instead which we are very thankful for. Unfortunately, Bishop Harold had another obligation and could not come along, but will visit the Diocese in September and help lead the Postulates and Candidates’ Retreat. Liz, you and Bishop Harold and the Diocese of Down and Dromore have been and continue to be such a blessing to all of us in the Diocese of Albany. In addition to Liz and Rosemary, we are also honored to have with us from Down and Dromore, Andrew “Brandy” Brannigan, Katy Purvis, Jeffrey Currie, Rev. Roy Taylor, Rev. Gordon Whitehead, Francis Rutledge, Roberta Rogers, Hilda Arnold, Jane Corbett and Gail Redmond. I have asked their team leader, Andrew Brannigan, to share a word of greeting with us tomorrow. Liz and other members of the Irish Delegation will be leading a variety of great workshops this weekend. Thank you so much for coming to be with us and sharing that which the Lord has given you to share with us. Welcome!

The next couple I would like to introduce are two very dear and special friends, well known and loved by the people of the Diocese of Albany.

Having been away for the past three years, after faithfully serving our Lord and His Church in this Diocese for the previous 36 years, please join me in welcoming home the retired 8<sup>th</sup> Bishop of Albany, Bishop Dan and Carol Herzog. Although they were never really very far away, they have been greatly missed. I have asked Bishop Dan to join me and Bishop Ball in exercising our Episcopal ministry in serving the people of the Diocese of Albany. While I have a growing list of special projects and ministries that Bishop Dan will be assisting me with, one of the most important that I have asked him to do is to help with pastoral care for the clergy, in particular, I have asked Bishop Dan and Carol to serve as chaplains to the retired clergy of the Diocese, a group that deserves our thanks and appreciation. And while not currently on the visitation Rota, he is available and willing to make parish visitations. Again, I am very appreciative to Bishop Dan and Bishop Ball for their willingness to assist me.

Speaking of Bishop Ball, he is not able to be with us this evening, but will be here in the morning so please join me when he arrives, in extending a special welcome to Bishop David Ball, the retired 7th Bishop of Albany and a dear friend of this Diocese. We need to thank him for all that he continues to do in serving our Lord and His Church at the Cathedral of All Saints and throughout the Diocese.

We welcome Mother Miriam and Sister Mary Elizabeth of the Sisters of St. Mary. As many of you know, Mother Miriam underwent major heart surgery shortly after Easter and is now by the grace of God well on the road to recovery. We are richly blessed by the Sisters' Spirit-filled presence in our Diocese and their unceasing prayers. Mother, we give thanks to God for you and each of the Sisters of the Community of St. Mary. Thank you for joining us, for all your many prayers and your powerful Christian witness.

On a personal note, I always look forward to sharing the Diocesan Convention with Karen and the kids, even though our time together is often limited at best, as I run from one service or meeting to another. I am so appreciative to Karen and Chris and Catie for their constant love and support. The Lord has blessed me richly through them. Unfortunately, Catie is scheduled to take the ACT exam tomorrow morning and is very sad that she will not be able to be at Convention this year. For the past few years, it was our son Chris who hasn't been able to attend due to college and ROTC commitments as well as a particular romantic endeavor. Fortunately this year, not only is Chris able to attend, but our beautiful new daughter-in-

law, Lauren is also able to join us. Karen and I are very proud of Chris and Lauren who both graduated from Hamilton College last month. Following in what appears to have become a family tradition, Chris has been commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the United States Air Force. He is currently working at Hamilton College, awaiting his active duty orders. It appears that his first assignment after Tech School, will be a one year unaccompanied remote tour to South Korea, where he will be serving as a Public Affairs Officer. Trying to make the best of what will be a difficult year apart, Lauren has just been hired as an actuary for Utica Mutual Insurance Company, a job that she worked very hard for and is very excited about.

I would like to take just a moment to congratulate not only Chris and Lauren, but all the recent college and soon to be high school graduates. We are very proud of you for all your hard work and wish you all God's blessings as you begin this new chapter in your lives. In addition I want to say a special thank you to all the men and women who are bravely serving in the United States Armed Forces, putting their lives on the line in the defense of this country and the protection of our freedom. May the Lord bless and protect you and your families, provide for your needs and comfort you in times of danger and separation. If we have any military members currently serving or their families, would you please stand. We salute you and we thank you!

I wish time permitted for me to personally recognize and thank each person who has come to Convention this weekend as well as those unable to attend, for the multitude of ministries you are involved in and for your many contributions to the life of your parishes, the Diocese and the larger Church. Please know how much I appreciate and give thanks for each of you. I am honored to serve with you.

Recognizing that on rare occasions I have been know to talk a little too long, one of the things I always struggle with in writing the bishop's address for Diocesan Convention is knowing how much time to spend thanking people for all the many things they have done over the previous year. I have come to the conclusion that it is time well spent and that I can't say thank you enough. With that said, I do need to take just a few more moments to recognize a few people who are in key leadership positions and upon whom I greatly depend.

First, as in the past several years, we owe a tremendous debt of thanks to three very hard working, highly organized, patient and gifted ladies, without whom this Convention Weekend would never have been possible. Carol Drummond, Convention Coordinator, Micki Thomas and Sue Ellen Ruetsch, have been instrumental in planning, organizing and carrying out hundreds of details involved in putting on this weekend. Two of the three ladies have been plagued with some very serious medical concerns that could easily have derailed their efforts, but they persevered and refused to give in. Working closely by their side and dealing with her own health issues, i.e. a broken leg, Debbie Fish has also been a tremendous help. Please join me in saying THANK YOU to these dear sisters in Christ. God Bless you!

Before I forget, let us also say thank you to Steve Tamm and his very dedicated staff here at Camp of the Woods for their warm welcome and all they are doing behind the scenes in hosting us during Convention. We greatly appreciate and thank you! Each year the facilities get even better.

Archdeacon Harvey Huth, Secretary of the Diocese, played a key role in organizing the business aspects of the Convention. He is to be commended not only for all his hard work in preparing for the business session of Convention, but for the outstanding job he has done organizing and putting together the Convention Journal. If you have not taken a close look at the 2009 Journal, you need to do so. It is a wealth of valuable information.

Stephen Hasslacher has once again demonstrated his outstanding artistic ability in designing the Convention Logo and has assisted in a variety of other ways. Fr. Christopher Brown and his team of very gifted musicians helped organize and will provide our music. The new dean of the Cathedral -- Dean David Collum, helped plan and put together the liturgy for the weekend. Deacon Nancy Goff has helped organize and arrange for all the vendors. Thank you Fr. Cooper and your dedicated team that is available for the Sacrament of Reconciliation throughout the weekend. Working side by side with them has been the diocesan staff, members of Christ the King staff, and countless other volunteers. Thank you for all that each of you has done.

Having just completed his first year (of what I pray will be many more years to come as Diocesan Chancellor), Fr. Chip Strickland has provided me and the Diocese outstanding legal counsel. I am very appreciative to Fr. Chip as well as our Assistant Chancellor, Tom Bell for their legal and

parliamentary expertise. Fr. Charles King, head of the Constitution and Canons has also been of great assistance.

Fr. Peter Schofield, I want to thank you and all the members of the Commission on Ministry and Fr. Paul Hart and all the Standing Committee Members for serving our Diocese and the larger Church so faithfully. I am also very appreciative to each member of the Diocesan Council for your service.

Turning now to those folks who work with me on a daily basis, ministering to the Diocese:

Canon Bob Haskell, my Canon to the Ordinary, and his wife Margaret, have been and continue to be such a blessing to me and our Diocese, often working behind the scenes supporting the various ministries of the Diocese, particularly helping me to better minister to the clergy and their families. They have both been very involved in helping to organize, plan and implement many facets of the Convention. Canon Bob and Margaret, thank you for giving so much of yourselves in the service of our Lord and His Church.

Canon Jerry Carroll, my Lay Canon for Administration, consistently goes above and beyond the call of duty. Jerry, I give thanks to God for you and greatly appreciate all you do. He too has been very involved in helping to make the Convention become a reality. In addition to Jerry, I also want to thank his wife, Fran, for all her volunteer work at the Diocesan Office. This past year in their spare time, Fran and Margaret Haskell took on the impossible task of trying to weed through and organize the many piles in my office. God bless you!!!

Beth Strickland, our Diocesan Deployment Officer, is doing an outstanding job assisting our parishes during their search process when clergy vacancies occur, in addition to assisting me with the interview of new clergy coming into the diocese and clergy assignments, as well as a multitude of other things. You might recall, Beth is the one who was so faithful in sending out updates on Fr. Nigel's condition during his time in the hospital. Thank you, Beth for all your hard work. You are a blessing to me and the Diocese.

Canon George Marshall, another very important member of the Diocesan Team, is doing a wonderful job serving as Editor of The Albany Episcopalian and Administrator of Albany Episcopal Charities. Thank you George for your dedicated service.

I want to thank Peter Minucci and the folks at the Episcopal Counseling Service for their ministry to the Diocese and the wider community.

I am very appreciative to our South Swan Street Diocesan Staff -- Lorin, Kris, Carol, Joan, Sue, Ray and Tim. They too, work very hard and are doing a great job, along with Clark Curtis, our Diocesan Treasurer who I greatly appreciate and who donates all his time to the Diocese. As Clark will share with you tomorrow, the audit for 2009 is complete and once again – it is a clean audit, with no qualifiers or areas of concern – a testament to the dedication and hard work of the S. Swan Street Staff.

Before going on, I would like to take just a moment to specially recognize Joan Ecker, our longest serving member of the Diocesan Staff who just recently celebrated what I thought was her 20<sup>th</sup>, but turned out to be her 21<sup>st</sup> Anniversary with the Diocese. Joan, you are a dear friend and valued member of the staff. Thank you for your faithful and dedicated service.

As most of you are aware, Dean Marshall Vang has just recently retired as the 19<sup>th</sup> Dean of the Cathedral Of All Saints. Dean Vang I want to thank you for your many contributions to the Cathedral and the Diocese at large, especially for modeling and encouraging each of us to strive for liturgical excellence in our worship of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is now my great honor and privilege to introduce the 20<sup>th</sup> Dean of the Cathedral, The Very Rev. Dave Collum and his wife, Beth. Prior to being elected Dean, Fr. Collum served as the rector of St. John's, Delhi and St. Peter's, Hobart, as well as Dean of the Susquehanna. He has already given much to the life and ministry of the Diocese and has much more to offer. Dean Collum, thank you for your willingness to serve our Lord and His Church as the new dean of our Cathedral. May the Lord bless you and the Cathedral in your new ministry together. Dean Collum's Institution will be next Saturday, June 19<sup>th</sup>, beginning at 11:00 a.m.. Everyone is invited.

Canon Matt Baker, Director of Christ the King Spiritual Life Center, as always is doing a truly outstanding job, along with Maggie and all the dedicated staff at Christ the King. Day in and day out, they sacrificially give of themselves ministering to the people of this diocese and the larger Church. In addition to Canon Matt and the staff, I extend a special thank you to the countless volunteers and others who contribute in so many ways to the life and ministry of the Spiritual Life Center. God continues to bless and use Christ the King Spiritual Life Center to minister to His people and build up His Kingdom in ways that we could never have imagined. If you have never been to the Spiritual Life Center, or haven't been there recently, I invite and encourage you to come and visit and bring a friend. You will be blessed and we will be blessed by your presence. This past year, over 40,000 people visited or attended events at the Spiritual Life Center.

A vitally important part of that which goes on at Christ the King is the healing ministry. Fr. Nigel Mumford, Lynn, Sandra, and all the members of the Healing Ministry Prayer Teams at the SLC, as well as in parishes throughout the Diocese, are doing a phenomenal job, sharing the love and healing grace of our Lord Jesus Christ with all those who come seeking prayers for healing for themselves and their loved ones. This past year, the very one who the Lord called to help lead and build up the Christian Healing Ministry in our Diocese, became a chief recipient of countless prayers and God's overwhelming love and healing grace. After contracting the Swine Flu and double pneumonia, as many of you know, Fr. Nigel was on the very brink of death. Despite the gallant efforts of his doctors and nurses, their came a point where there was nothing more modern medicine could do. Never giving up, the people of this Diocese, particularly the Daughters of the King and the healing prayer teams in so many of our parishes and countless others from around the world joined together in holding Fr. Nigel and Lynn up in prayer. The Lord heard your prayers and answered them, sparing Fr. Nigel's life and returning him to us. Thank you for your faithfulness. May the Lord continue to bless each of you as you serve as an instrument through which our Lord Jesus Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit may pour out His healing grace mightily, touching, transforming and healing the hearts, bodies and minds of all those seeking healing prayer.

A prayer ministry that has particularly touched my heart and seems to be spreading to other parishes through the Diocese is what has become known as the "Sidewalk Prayer Table Ministry." Torre Bissell and the Prayer Team at Christ Church, Schenectady were the first to get this invaluable and very

innovative prayer ministry up and running. Thank you for your holy boldness and your willingness to take the love and healing power of our Lord Jesus Christ out into the streets. God Bless You! In addition to the Prayer Table Ministry, for years Torre and Jean have helped organize and lead our Diocesan Prayer Intercessors for which I am very thankful. There is one other person whose prayer ministry stands out and has been such a blessing to so many and that is Deacon Greg Bailey, Deacon Vicar of Trinity, Gouverneur. Through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Deacon Bailey has written some of the most beautiful and profound prayers I have ever seen. Thank you Greg for listening to the Lord and being so faithful.

While we are on the subject of prayer, this past year, by invitation, a small, but powerful group of prayer warriors have visited several parishes throughout the Diocese, praying through every inch of the Church buildings, parish halls and in some cases the rectories, asking the Lord to cleanse and purify them of anything that is not of Him. As we have discussed in the past, many of our parishes while having much to be proud of and give thanks to God for, have also had times of trouble and woundedness that needs to be repented and healed of. When we purchased the Spiritual Life Center property, a similar team prayed throughout the property and every building, as we reclaimed and dedicated it to God's glory. It made all the difference. I would suggest every one of our parishes would benefit from having a prayer team go through and do a major "spiritual spring cleaning." Unfortunately, the Holy Spirit is not the only spiritual presence that attends Church. Satan and the power of darkness is real and he has infiltrated the Church in an effort to frustrate, divide and draw us away from Christ. We need to be intentional about inviting our Lord Jesus Christ, the Light of the World, to shine His light in our individual lives and that of our parish lives, driving out all darkness, setting us free to be the children of God and the servants of the Lord Most High that we have been called to be.

Getting back for just a moment to giving thanks, I want to thank all those involved in The Welcome Home Initiative, a healing ministry geared toward ministering to combat veterans and their families. This is a very difficult, but greatly needed and invaluable ministry to those who have sacrificed and given so much in the defense of our nation and that of our allies. May the Lord give you the strength and the courage to continue on.

One other extremely important ministry taking place at Christ the King that we can't overlook is the Beaver Cross Youth Ministry. Our new Beaver

Cross staff headed up by Wendy Clark and Meaghan Wilkins is committed to reaching out and ministering to the kids in our parishes and the surrounding communities, sharing the love and Good News of Jesus Christ. If your kids haven't signed up yet for this summer, I encourage you to do so. We have both Day Camp and Overnight Camp. Don't let finances keep your kids at home this summer. Scholarships are available.

We are blessed once again this year to have a number of young people from around the Diocese with us for Vacation Bible School and the Youth Rally that is taking place in conjunction with the Convention. Would all the kids please stand up? Welcome! It is so great to have you with us this weekend, but most especially, it is great to have you with us in Church every Sunday. I am very proud of you for making your faith a priority and coming to the Youth Rally and VBS. Your presence and participation are extremely important to the life and ministry of the Church. You help add life and vitality to our parish families and our worship. In case you don't know -- you, the young people of the Diocese, are some of the Church's most effective evangelists. I encourage you to invite your parents and your friends to come to Church with you. As I stated last year, do not be afraid to let your rector and the other adults in the parish know that you don't want to be a pew potato, but that you want to be an active part of the Church, involved in the worship and different parish and outreach ministries of the Church.

To my adult Brothers and Sisters in Christ, if we want and expect our kids to come to Church, we need to be faithful in coming ourselves. There will come a time when our kids are up and out of the house and will decide for themselves whether or not they are going to go to Church, but until that time -- bring them. Your example now, could very well determine whether the Church will have a place in the hearts and lives of our kids in the future. Not only do we need to bring them, but we need to make sure they have something to come to. If you don't have a Sunday School program or Youth Group, start one and then find the kids to fill it. There is nothing more exciting, more captivating, more fulfilling than a true encounter with the risen Lord Jesus Christ. There are far too many kids as well as adults in our communities who have no clue who Jesus is. It's time that we introduce them.

I am very appreciative to Vanessa Gleason and Brandii Baker and their dedicated team for heading up this year's Vacation Bible School. May the Lord bless you in your efforts and most especially, may He bless all the kids.

Leading this year's Youth Rally is the Rev. Tyler Slade and his fiancé Audrey. Thank you for being with us this weekend and sharing the love of Christ with our kids. Beginning in September, Tyler will come on board full time with the Diocese as Director of the Diocesan Youth Ministry. We are hoping to get him out into the Diocese to assist parishes with their youth ministry. He will also be leading the Christian Ed portion of Beaver Cross.

Also helping out this weekend are several members of the Brotherhood of St. Andrews, Cursillo, the Daughters of the King, the Franciscan Order of the Holy Cross and a special group led by Dave Reutsch --Lumberjacks for the Lord. I want to thank all the members of each of these special ministries not only for their assistance this weekend, but for all they do throughout the year. One of my greatest fears in naming individuals during this time of saying thank you, is that I will inadvertently forget someone I should have mentioned. No doubt I probably have so please forgive me. To all those mentioned by name and the thousands unnamed, but each vitally important to the live and ministry of our parishes, this diocese and the building up of God's Kingdom – Thank You!!! The Lord is doing a mighty work in and through each of you, and I give thanks to God for you.

Helping as we move forward is a new group of clergy that have joined sense we last met. Beginning first with those who have moved to the Diocese this past year, if you would please stand when I call your name: The Rev. Paul Blanch and his wife Maggie, Rector, St. George's Schenectady; The Rev. Mike Chapman and his wife Linda, Interim Rector, St. John's, Troy; The Rev. Adam Eagan and his wife Jeanne, Rector, St. Stephen's, Delmar; The Rev. Nixon McMillan and his wife Ann, Rector, St. Paul's, Albany; and The Rev. Mark Michael and his wife the Rev. Allison Michael, Rector, Christ Church, Cooperstown. Welcome to the Diocese!

In addition to those who have moved to the Diocese or become canonically resident, we have had a number of ordinations this past year, to include the following individuals to the Diaconate: Deacons: Kathryn Boswell, Jacob Dell, Rose Ann Felty, John Inserra, Nathaniel Lee, Randy Lukas, Thomas Malioneck, Hannah Mudge, Tyler Slade, Kyle Tomlin and Christina Vance.

Five of our transitional deacons were ordained to the priesthood: Joe Acanfora+, Gerry Clemmons, Nina George Hacker, Steven Scherck, and Scott Walker. Congratulations to all of our newly ordained deacons and priests and to those who are soon to be ordained. May the Lord bless you mightily in your new ministry.

On a sadder note, while welcoming several new clergy to the Diocese this year, unfortunately we have had four deaths among our retired clergy: Fr. David Terns, Fr. William Lange, Fr. Benjamin Nevitt, Fr. David Bugler, and Fr. William Hio. Rest eternal grant to them, O Lord: and let light perpetual shine upon them. May their souls and the souls of all the departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.

As attested to by the information about our new clergy shared above, the Diocese remains committed to calling and raising up gifted and holy men and women to the ordained ministry. We are also very committed to helping the lay people of this Diocese grow ever stronger in their faith and relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ and to raise up and equip godly lay men and women for lay leadership roles within the Church. As I am constantly reminding people, the Lord calls far more people to the lay ministry than He does to the ordained ministry. Without strong, godly, Christ-centered, well equipped lay leadership, our parishes and diocese cannot grow and accomplish that which the Lord calls us to. This must be a priority, not only at the diocesan level, but also at the parish level.

At last year's Diocesan Convention, I shared with you our newly revised Vision Statement for the Diocese. In case you have forgotten what it says, you can find it printed on the back cover of the ivory and blue folder in your bag. It is also printed on the back side of the book mark in your bag. You will also find it on the back cover of the Convention Workshop Schedule Booklet as well as the back cover of The Albany Episcopalian. In case you don't have any of those with you at the moment, let me share it now:

***The Diocese of Albany is One Church fulfilling the Great Commandment and Great Commission, moving from membership to discipleship; equipping, emboldening and sending disciples to make disciples.***

I truly believe that this statement captures that which the Lord is calling us to, and by God's grace and the guidance and empowering of the Holy

Spirit, I plan to spend the rest of my time as your bishop helping us live into the Lord's vision for His people in the Diocese of Albany.

For those who were able to attend, you will recall that the theme for this year's Parish Leadership Conference was: "Getting Back to the Basics – Reordering Our Lives Around the Great Commandment and the Great Commission." A copy of both the Great Commandment and the Great Commission is printed inside the ivory and blue convention folders as a reminder of not only that which the Lord calls us to, but commands of us. These two commands should be the underlying guide and motivation of all that we do individually as brothers and sisters in Christ and corporately in our parishes and the Diocese. There is no greater calling in all of creation than to love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind, and with all our strength and to love our neighbor as our self. And then to go out into all the world sharing God's love, making disciples of all nations, teaching all that the Lord has taught us, inviting people into a saving relationship with the Risen Lord Jesus Christ.

I spoke last year of the new Diocesan Confirmation Curriculum that was being designed for use in each of our parishes to help prepare our young people for Confirmation, with the hope and expectation that it would be completed by the Fall – I just failed to mention which Fall. I am so appreciative to the dedicated team of clergy and laity that has been working so hard this past year to finish the Confirmation Curriculum. Due to the extremely busy schedules of those involved, it has taken a little longer than we had originally anticipated. I believe all but three of the 27 units have been completed and are up on the Diocesan Website. The remaining three will be finished and ready for use by the end of this summer. Many of you have already begun using the Confirmation Curriculum and I want to thank you for your patience as the remaining units are finished. The team will be reviewing and editing the entire curriculum in preparation for classes beginning this Fall. If any of you have any thoughts, feedback, or corrections that would help improve the curriculum, please contact Mother Ellen Neufeld or Mother Laurie Garramone-Rohr as soon as possible.

Included with the Vision Statement last year, were twelve specific Marks of Discipleship and Diocesan Values that I encouraged us to study and meditate on. Sue Ellen Ruetsch led a wonderful Bible Study at Calvary Church, Burnt Hills centered on the Marks of Discipleship. I believe several other parishes did as well. To assist us in this study, a team of 12

individuals is actively working on writing a study guide and recording on DVD, a 12 to 15 minute teaching on each of the following Marks of Discipleship and Diocesan Values: Prayer and Worship, Scripture, Catholic Structures of Anglicanism, Christian Education, Christian Fellowship, Spiritual Gifts and Healing, Christian Service, Generosity in answering God's call as Stewards of His Creation, Evangelism, and Mission at home and abroad. We are planning to release them as a three-part series of four teachings each. By God's grace, it is our hope and plan to have the first series ready to go out to the Diocese by this Fall. When the series comes out, please take advantage of it and use it. In so doing, I pray the Lord will show us where we need to grow and how best to live into the vision He has given us.

As I travel around the Diocese, I am encouraged to hear of the various Bible Studies that are going on and the impact they are having in people's lives. A few parishes have multiple studies going on at the same time. I cannot stress enough the importance of taking time each day to read and study God's word. Enclosed in your convention bag, is a copy of "Encounter With God," a wonderful daily Bible devotional published by Scripture Union. Please take time to read and use it. I think you may find it more helpful than some of the other daily devotionals that are being used in some of our parishes. Every parish in this diocese, regardless of how large or small, should have ongoing Bible studies. As I stated in the past, they don't have to be on Sunday morning and they don't have to be in the Church building, nor do they have to be led by the clergy. They can be in people's homes during the week. The important thing is that they happen. As Paul reminds us in II Timothy 3:16, "All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."

Last year I hinted at the importance of not only reading the Bible, but also trying to memorize key Bible verses. This year I am going to do more than hint. I invite and encourage every parish in the Diocese to send me a list (preferably by August 15<sup>th</sup>) of the ten scripture passages that individuals in the parish have found to be most helpful or meaningful in their lives. We will compile a copy of the top 50 to 100 passages and send them out so children and adults alike can be touched and blessed by them, hopefully committing to memory those they find most helpful. We will find a way to honor and recognize (at a parish and diocesan level) those folks who commit themselves to memorizing God's Word.

I have spoken the last couple of years about a “Spirit of Poverty” that has plagued so many individuals and parishes throughout the Diocese. The good news is that we seem to be making progress in combating the lies of Satan and helping people to be better stewards of that entrusted to them by the Lord. The bad news is that there are still far too many people and parishes enslaved by a “Spirit of Poverty” believing that the “almighty dollar” will save them if they can just make enough and keep enough for themselves, refusing to trust God with their material treasures, thereby never discovering the truth and wonder of God’s provision when we honor the tithe. Trusting in the ‘things’ of this world, rather than the ‘Creator’ of the world often leads to physical, mental, emotional and spiritual exhaustion; the break up of marriages and families; and lonely, empty, selfish, broken and shattered lives. I continue to encourage you to check out the various materials Crown Financial Ministries has to offer. Many people have found them to be a real blessing. I realize a number of folks throughout the Diocese are going through some very difficult financial times, some having lost their jobs and others having had their hours and their pay cut, or suffering a major illness and mounting medical bills, thus making it very hard to pay the bills and make ends meet. There is no better time than in the midst of a major economic downturn such as the one we are in, to finally learn to trust the Lord with our finances, rather than continue to go it alone, only to be enslaved and controlled more and more by our unhealthy trust in or quest for the things of this world.

Mother Susan Baker Borjeson and her Tithe Committee are continuing to work on a program that they hope will be a blessing to this Diocese and its people. The financial crisis that so many of our parishes are in could be alleviated if each member of this Diocese took tithing seriously and committed to working towards it. Not only would it help our parishes pay their day to day bills, but it would also provide needed funds for mission as well as better enable the Church to reach out and minister to the poor and help those going through difficult times. The Lord is waiting for us to trust Him so that He can take that which we offer Him and bless and multiply it many times over, returning it to us to be used for that which we have been called to. We will never have true peace until Jesus is Lord of our entire life, to include our money and earthly treasures.

Before closing, there are two final things that I need to briefly reflect on. The first is the current state of the Church and a resolution that will be coming before us tomorrow to endorse The Anglican Communion Covenant. Like many of you, I remain deeply frustrated and grieved by the growing division within The Episcopal Church and the wider Anglican Communion. The recent election and consecration of an individual living in a homosexual relationship with another person, as Bishop Suffragan of Los Angeles, has only added more fuel to the fire. I know there are some well intentioned people in this room who support the Los Angeles election, while most, to include myself, do not. Regardless of where one stands on the appropriateness or inappropriateness of homosexual relationships (or any sexual relationship for that matter outside of marriage between a man and a woman), once again The Episcopal Church has taken an action that the vast majority of the world wide Anglican Communion asked them not to do, showing disregard not only for the wishes of the rest of the Communion, but for the damage and harm the Los Angeles election is causing for many of our brothers and sisters in Christ throughout the Communion, especially those living in Islamic countries.

Some of the questions that have come up during the recent discussions around the Diocese on the Anglican Covenant, is “Why now? The Anglican Communion has existed all these many years without a Covenant, why do we need one now? If we treat one another with dignity and respect, why do we need a Covenant? Won’t it just cause more division by punishing certain members of the Communion and forcing them out?”

In response to these questions, I would suggest that we have only to look at the recent Los Angeles election to see why an Anglican Covenant is now needed. Common beliefs and values that we once shared have come under attack and can no longer be taken for granted. The bonds of affection and respect that once existed throughout the Anglican Communion has been shredded. The Anglican Communion Covenant is not designed nor intended to divide or punish, but rather provide a framework in which the members of the Anglican Communion can live and work together to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ, building up the Kingdom of God, while resolving issues that could divide us. The Anglican Covenant reminds us of that which we hold in common and cautions us for the sake of the Communion, not to act unilaterally in areas that would be seen as divisive. While not demanding that every member respond in exactly the same way to the various issues

before us, it does remind us that our actions do have consequences and we need to be accountable to one another.

At last year's Diocesan Convention, I stated that I believed it was important that we study the Anglican Communion Covenant in preparation for voting at this year's Convention on whether to endorse it or not. To assist us in that study, I asked our Canon Theologian, the Very Rev. Dr. Christopher Brown to make a presentation on the history of the Anglican Communion and the proposed Anglican Communion Covenant. The presentation was filmed and recorded on a DVD entitled, "Understanding the Anglican Covenant." It was mailed to each parish in the Diocese at the end of Feb./ beginning of March of this year, with the hope and expectation that each parish would study the Covenant in preparation of its discussion at this year's convention. A copy of the Anglican Covenant was posted on the Diocesan Website. In addition, I wrote an article addressing the Anglican Communion Covenant in the most recent addition of The Albany Episcopalian which is found in your convention bags. After reading and studying the Covenant, I believe it is needed at this time in the life of the Anglican Communion and should be endorsed by the Diocese of Albany, for the reasons mentioned this evening as well as those mentioned in the Albany Episcopalian and the DVD. As your Bishop I endorse the Anglican Communion Covenant and I encourage you to do the same.

The last thing I want to bring before you this evening before I close, is my desire to enact Canon 6.2 of the Diocesan Constitution and Canons which states that: "The Bishop may nominate to the Convention, for election, one or more Archdeacons who, under the Bishop, shall have such duties as may be assigned by the Bishop." We are currently blessed with two Archdeacons, Harvey Huth and Barbara Hanstine, nominated several years ago by Bishop Dan to assist in leading and ministering to the deacons in the Diocese. They will continue in that ministry. However, I have other needs that can best be met by priests serving as Archdeacons, particularly to assist me in the metropolitan area with state and ecumenical affairs as well as represent me in a more official capacity up in the northern part of the diocese. After much thought and prayer I nominate for your election two proven and well respected leaders of this diocese: the Dean of our Cathedral, the Very Rev. David Collum and the Dean of the Saint Lawrence Deanery, the Very Rev. Canon Dr. Christopher Brown.

Finally, as we reflect on the theme of this our 142 Annual Convention, in going to the cross as a sacrifice for the sins of the whole world, Jesus gave His ALL in order that we might live. In calling us to be His Disciples, He expects no less from us. May He give us the grace we need to answer that call as we Pick up Our Cross and Follow Him!

May the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be upon you and remain with you this night and always! May He watch over you and protect you. May His light shine upon you and radiate from you. May He fill you with His Holy Spirit. May all that we do as we go forward in His name, be in accordance with His will and be to His honor and glory and the benefit of His Church and people. Amen.