



FORWARD *in* MISSION

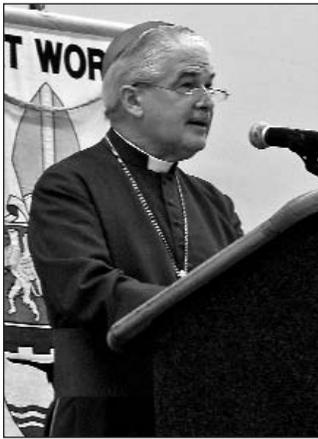
A publication of the Episcopal Diocese of Fort Worth

Advent/Christmas 2007

25 Years Together in Mission

Bishop Iker's Address to the 25th Annual Diocesan Convention

Greetings and welcome in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to this 25th Annual Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Fort Worth. It promises to be



a momentous one, with long-lasting implications for all of us.

I would like to set the tone for our deliberations today by beginning with a quote from St. Paul the Apostle in the 16th chapter of his First Letter to the Corinthians: "Be watchful, stand firm in your faith, be courageous, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love." (I Corinthians 16:13-14) What a wonderful text

to guide and direct us as we debate the proposals that are before this Convention.

First, there is a warning - a warning that we must be watchful, for not everything we hear today will be good counsel or of God. Some will seek to mislead us or perhaps even intimidate us. Some will argue that we do not need to take any action, to leave well enough alone, to go along, in order to get along. Beware of those who would lull us into complacency in the face of attacks and assaults on biblical orthodoxy in our Church. St. Peter cautions us in the same way in his First Epistle: "Be sober, be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith." (I Peter 5:8-9a) Whenever Christians gather to take a stand for the Gospel, even in church conventions, the devil will be close at hand, seeking to beguile, divide, and mislead. What I say to one, I say to all: Watch out!

Second, there is an exhortation - an exhortation to stand firm in the faith, the faith that we have received, the faith of the apostles, "the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints," to quote verse 3 of St. Jude's Epistle. We must contend for the faith, resisting and repudiating the persuasive innovations of those who pervert the grace of God into immorality and deny the uniqueness of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. In every age and in our own day, there are those who would twist and reinterpret the biblical faith so as to make it more man-pleasing and less offensive to the contemporary secular world. Counterfeit Christianity, man-made religion, and revisionist theology must be identified and rebuked for the sake of the unchanging Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. In the Epistle reading just this past Sunday, St. Paul exhorted us to "stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by letter." (II Thessalonians 2:15) Those traditions of which he speaks involve the doctrinal, moral, liturgical and theological teachings of the apostles and are the core of what we know as the Apostolic Tradition of the catholic faith. Sadly, tradition has become a bad word in many quarters of the Episcopal Church, where the historic, biblical position is often ridiculed, persecuted, and dismissed as irrelevant and hopelessly out of date for today's world. St. Paul does not mince words about the importance of standing firm in the true faith when he writes to the Galatians: "As we have said before, so now I say again, If any one is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed. Am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I trying to

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please men? If I were still pleasing men, I should not be a servant of Christ." (Galatians 1:9-10) Let us today take a strong stand to remain firm in the faith we have received.

Third, there is the call for us to be courageous and strong. This is never easy, my friends, especially when we are faced by angry opponents and threats of retaliation. This Convention is being very carefully watched today, to see if we have the courage of our convictions. Are we willing to stand up and be counted when threatened by litigation and lawsuits?

"Let us today take a strong stand to remain firm in the faith we have received."

When warned of inhibitions and depositions? When intimidated with threats of replacement strategies to remove entire Standing Committees, replace the legitimate diocesan authorities, and indeed even to reconstitute new, shadow Conventions in place of the current, constitutional one? Let our "yes" be "yes," and let our "no" be "no," not a garbled yes and no at the same time.

Let us not lose our will to stand for conscience and truth, whatever the consequences or the cost. Dare to be a Daniel! Dare to stand alone, if need be! But we are not alone; we are together. And there are many others who stand with us and who look to us, having made a stand on many previous occasions, when all the threatening and intimidating and ridiculing is done – to stand firm in the Lord Jesus Christ, with courage and boldness, and perseverance, not in our own strength, but strong in the grace and the power of the Holy Spirit of God. What better words for the clergy and laity of this diocese than the word of God to Joshua: "Be strong and of good courage; be not frightened, neither be dismayed; for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go." (Joshua 1:9) It was a time such as this, a time of choice about the future, a time of anxiety about what lies ahead, a time to decide to leave the past behind and move forward, that Joshua put it to the people of Israel before entering the Promised Land: "Choose this day whom you will serve...but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Choose this day, Fort Worth, choose to make and secure a spiritual future for your children and your

grandchildren in the church of tomorrow. Be courageous and strong, and don't look back!

Fourth and last, there is the earnest appeal – "let all that you do be done in love." Let our watchfulness be done in love, even love for our enemies and our persecutors. Let our firmness in faith be matched by our commitment to love – love for those who oppose us, love for those who have strayed from the faith, love for members of the same household who disagree with us and differ from us. Let our courage and boldness be expressed in love for all sinners, love for those who threaten us, showing the sacrificial love of Jesus for a fallen world and for all people, created in the image of God. Let us speak the truth in love, not seeking revenge or harm to anyone, but only the glory of God, the building up of the Body of Christ, and the extension of Christ's kingdom in the world. Pray God that our debates and decisions this day may be marked by the love of Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul reminds us: "Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things." (I Corinthians 13:4-7) Whatever comes of our decisions today, let us debate in love, decide in love, and deal with one another in love, as we face the consequences of choices we must make.

It is within this biblical and spiritual context, then, that we consider the weighty proposals that are before us at this Convention. We are mindful that the organizing, primary Convention of a new, as yet unnamed, diocese was held 25 years ago this week, on Nov. 13, 1982, at All Saints' Episcopal Day School, here in Fort Worth. A Special Convention of the Diocese of Dallas on June 19, 1982, approved the request of the Bishop, the Rt. Rev. A. Donald Davies, to divide the Diocese in order to form a new one in the western portion. The General Convention met in September of that year and likewise concurred. As you know, Bishop Davies chose to go

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with the new Diocese and became our first Bishop, presiding at our very first Convention. A committee had suggested three possible names for the new Diocese, which up to that point had simply been referred to as “the western diocese.” The proposed choices were the Diocese of Fort Worth, the Diocese of Central Texas, and the Diocese of the Rio Brazos de Dios. Canon James DeWolfe of All Saints’ Church in Fort Worth suggested the name be the Diocese of the Trinity. A vote was taken, and we all know the results. We chose to be known as the Diocese of Fort Worth. Appointments were made, elections were held, and a budget was approved. A Constitution and Canons were adopted, and a resolution was approved to accede to the Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church, in order to “be admitted into union with the General Convention.”

Before proceeding, I would like to take a moment to acknowledge and honor those who are present with us today who were participants in that historic Primary Convention held 25 years ago. Would you please stand? Thank you, and God bless you.

At issue in this Convention today are constitutional and canonical decisions about how we shall chart our course as a Diocese for the next 25 years and beyond. We are preparing a future for our children and our grandchildren. As you know, by way of background, the chancellor to the Presiding Bishop, wrote my chancellor on Oct. 19, 2006, declaring that certain provisions in our diocesan Constitution and Canons were contrary to those of the Episcopal Church and needed to be changed, or else the Presiding Bishop would “have to consider what sort of action she must take in order to bring your diocese into compliance.” The following month, on Nov. 15, the Executive Council of the General Convention

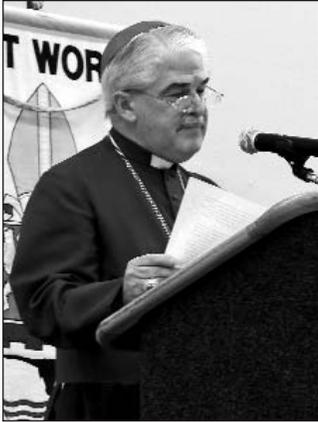
received a task force report identifying Fort Worth as a “problem diocese” that needed to be monitored. On June 14, 2007, this same Executive Council declared certain constitutional and canonical amendments in this Diocese to be “null and void.” Our Standing Committee and I replied by pointing out that such declarations exceeded the authority of the Executive Council, which is responsible for the program and budget of the General Convention, and that they had no legislative or judicial authority to make such a pronouncement. The Council’s declaration about the legitimate legislative process in this Diocese is, in fact, null and void.

And then just last week, the Presiding Bishop sent me an open letter, that she quickly posted on the Internet, threatening disciplinary action against me if I did not prevent this Convention from acting on certain legislative proposals. I believe all of you have seen my reply. What you may not have seen is the Episcopal News Service story saying that if I did not heed her warning it would (and I quote) “force her to take action to bring the diocese and its leadership into line with the mandates of the national Church.” Now hold on there a minute. I don’t want to force her to do anything, but I must object to the claim that the Presiding Bishop has any canonical authority in this Diocese or any legitimate power over the leadership of this Diocese. She has no authority to bring Fort Worth into line with the mandates of a so-called “national Church.” There is no such thing as “the national Church.” We are a confederation of dioceses, related to each other by our participation in General Convention. From the earliest days of the beginnings of the Episcopal Church in this country, including the formation of dioceses and eventually the creation of the General Convention itself, there has been a strong mistrust of centralized authority that is deeply rooted in our histo-

The children of St. Peter & St. Paul, Arlington, painted a colorful banner inspired by the Convention's theme.

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ry as Episcopalians. We do not have an archbishop in this Church, who has authority over other bishops and their dioceses. Instead, we have a Presiding Bishop, with very limited canonical responsibilities, mainly administrative in nature. We must object to the tendency in recent years in this Church to create some sort of central bureaucracy at the top that



holds power and authority over the various dioceses of this Church. We do not have a curia that dictates policy and dogma in this Church. We do not have a Presiding Bishop with papal authority over us, nor do we believe in the infallibility of any bishop or any council or, indeed, of any General Convention. If I may be so bold to speak on your behalf, dear friends: the leadership of this Diocese does not need to be brought into line with the

mandates of some mythical “national Church.”

Let us now turn to the first two proposals we will consider today. Proposed Constitutional Amendment A would have us delete that portion of Article 1 that stipulates that “no action of General Convention which is contrary to Holy Scripture and the Apostolic Teaching of the Church shall be of any force or effect in this Diocese.” In other words, we are being asked to declare that we will conform to and obey the dictates of the General Convention even when we believe they are contrary to the Bible and to the Apostolic Teaching of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.

Proposed Constitutional Amendment B addresses the issue of the ownership of church property in this Diocese. It would have us declare that all our churches are really owned by The Episcopal Church, not by this Diocese or by our parishes. It would declare that if we belong to TEC, then we are owned and controlled by TEC. Such an understanding is contrary to the Constitution of this Diocese, as it has existed since its original adoption in 1982. The title to all church property in this Diocese is held in the name of the Corporation of the

Episcopal Diocese of Fort Worth, for the beneficial use of our parishes and missions. Never once, in the entire history of this Diocese, has the Bishop, the Standing Committee, or the Board of Trustees of the Corporation ever sought (or ever needed) the consent or approval of any person or church body outside this Diocese to buy, sell or encumber any of our properties. We have never needed the authorization of any other authority, ecclesiastical or otherwise, outside this Diocese, in order to start churches, to close churches, to move churches, or even to sell churches, and we don't intend to start doing so now.

All of the other Proposed Constitutional Amendments coming before us are sponsored by the Standing Committee and are unanimously endorsed by the Committee on Constitution and Canons. Explanations and the rationale behind these proposals have been put before all of you in writing. They have been thoroughly discussed in your deanery meetings, in parish forums, in vestry meetings, and in various other formats. Today they will be debated, prayed over, and then voted upon. However, as you well know, they would not become effective until or unless they were ratified on second reading at our Annual Convention in 2008.

It is important for this Convention to remember what the Standing Committee wrote to us in September as a kind of preamble to the proposals that are before us:

“The Episcopal Diocese of Fort Worth has always been a traditional, conservative diocese, adhering to the beliefs and practices of the historic catholic faith. This means it has often found itself in conflict with decisions of the General Convention, which has continued a series of innovations in liturgy, theology, and the sacraments. For 25 years, the diocese has attempted to differentiate itself from the actions of the General Convention and its ongoing effort to revise and redefine the historic teaching of the Church on faith and morals, as revealed in Holy Scripture.

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25th Annual Diocesan Convention

Results of elections and balloting on amendments

The text of all amendments is available on the diocesan Web site, at www.fwepiscopal.org, in the "Report of the Committee on Constitution and Canons." If you do not have computer access, ask your church office to print the report for you.

Amended Canon 32 – adopted
88% clergy/82% lay

Proposed Amendment A – defeated
84% clergy/80% lay

Proposed Amendment B – defeated
88% clergy/87% lay

Proposed Amendment C – adopted
84% clergy/79% lay

Proposed Amendment D – adopted as amended (amended text is in **purple** type below)
83% clergy/77% lay

The Episcopal Diocese of Fort Worth is a constituent member of the Anglican Communion, a Fellowship within the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church, consisting of those duly constituted Dioceses, Provinces and regional churches in communion with the See of Canterbury, upholding and propagating the historic Faith and Order as set forth in the **Old and New Testaments and expressed** in the Book of Common Prayer.

Proposed Amendment E – adopted
83% clergy/80% lay

Proposed Amendment F – adopted
83% clergy/78% lay

Second Reading: Amendment to Article 12 – withdrawn

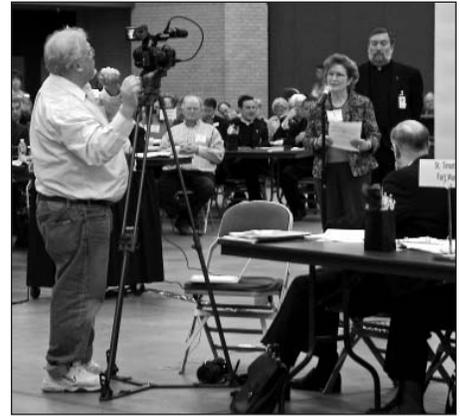
Second Reading: Amendment to Article 13 – adopted
90% clergy/87% lay

Resolution 1 – adopted by voice vote – The Resolution thanked the Archbishop of Canterbury's Panel of Reference for its work on our appeal.

Resolution 2 – adopted by voice vote – The Resolution thanked the Province of the Southern Cone for its provision of pastoral and emergency care for Anglican dioceses at odds with their provinces, and to ask the Bishop and Standing Committee of this diocese to prepare a report on the implications of accepting this invitation.

In other business, a balanced budget of \$2.1 million was approved for 2008, and each congregation's financial assessment was reduced by .5 percent on the first \$50,000 of income.

More Convention coverage, including a photo gallery of congregational history displays, is online at www.fwepiscopal.org.



This year's convention was streamed live on the Internet over the diocesan Web site and on AnglicanTV. Above, AnglicanTV's Kevin Kallsen adjusts his camera while delegate Judy Mayo speaks in favor of the amendment to Canon 32.

Elections to diocesan offices

Standing Committee

Clerical member: Fr. Christopher Cantrell

Lay member: Judy Mayo

Ecclesiastical Trial Court

Fr. David Madison

Trustee, University of the South

Kent Henning

Deputies to General Convention

In the clerical order: Canon Charles Hough, Dean Ryan Reed, Fr. Christopher Cantrell, Fr. Thomas Hightower

In the lay order: Judy Mayo, Franklin Salazar, Walter Virden III, Jo Ann Patton



Around the Diocese

2007 Bishop Iker Challenge met

The annual Bishop Iker Challenge Golf Tournament continues to be one of the largest golf tournaments in the DFW metroplex. Two hundred eighty-eight golfers from parishes all over the diocese teed off on Friday, June 1, at Squaw Valley Golf Course in Glen Rose.



The team of Langas, Lawless, Schissler and Sosa (pictured at left), from St. Peter & St. Paul in Arlington, finished in first place overall, with a score of 56. The best investment of the tournament was made by Jerre Todd, also of St. Peter & St. Paul, who plunked down \$5 for a drawing ticket and won a custom-fitted set of clubs, valued at \$1,000. (We understand that Jerre, good dad that he is, has given the winning ticket to his son, Brooks.) A pair of Southwest Airlines tickets were won by Gilman Tracy, a parishioner at All Saints', Fort Worth.



Kelly Franklin, whose company prints the Forward in Mission newsletter, catches his door prize. Kelly is a hole sponsor and plays in the tournament every year.

This tournament was a huge success. It provided an opportunity for members and friends of the diocese to come together for a great time benefiting a great cause. The net proceeds for this year amounted to \$29,600, funding swimming pool enhancements at Camp Crucis and providing 50 scholarships for young people to attend Summer Camp. Since its inception in 2001, the tournament has raised over \$200,000.

Our heartfelt thanks go to tournament organizer George Wragg and his family, and all the parish coordinators, volunteers, participants, sponsors, and donors.

Now save the date: The 8th Annual Bishop Iker Challenge is set for Saturday, Sept. 20, 2008.

Scouts "On the Wings of Eagles"

Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts and Camp Fire Boys and Girls are invited to participate in the God & Church/God & Life retreat over the weekend of Feb. 29 – March 2, 2008, at Camp Wisdom in south Dallas County. The Commission on Scout-

ing in the Diocese of Dallas is sponsoring the program for youth in grades 6 through 12. Participants will earn about 60 percent of the credits for a God & Church or God & Life award and will be presented with the Wings of Eagles retreat patch as they become flying officers in the "Royal Anglican Air Force." The cost is \$25 (including meals); group discounts are available. Scouts bring their own camping equipment. E-mail Fr. Richard Carlisle at pa-icarlisle@stbarnabas.com or see www.stbarnabas.com/retreat.

Mother's Day offering

Thanks go to all those who made gifts this year honoring mothers, grandmothers, and other special women in their lives. The World Mission Committee's Mother's Day offering raised over \$11,200 for *La Gran Familia* boys' and girls' home in Northern Mexico. A list of the women honored this year is at www.fwepiscopal.org.



"Visionary Parenting" conference

Rob Rienow, developer of the "Visionary Parenting" series, will be the featured speaker at a conference Saturday, Dec. 8, at Saint John's, Fort Worth. VP inspires parents and grandparents to impress the hearts of children with a love for God and equips churches to develop family ministries. Saint John's has sponsored the eight-week VP course on Sunday evenings this fall.

The conference is scheduled from 8:30 a.m. to 4:15 p.m. The cost is \$15 for a half day (either half) and \$20 for the whole day. Bishop Iker will celebrate Holy Eucharist at the close of the conference. Lunch and childcare are provided. For more information contact Kristy Leaseburg at the church (817-927-5341).

Canterbury UTA news

The Canterbury ministry at the University of Texas at Arlington (UTA) will be starting afresh in January. Our lay director is moving on to pursue seminary studies, and Fr. Timothy Matkin of St. Alban's in Arlington will be taking over as

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chaplain. He would like to invite students and faculty from the UTA community (including those in your parish) to consider leadership and volunteer roles in this ministry before January. Please help Fr. Matkin to connect with them by sending the name, e-mail, and phone (along with a description – student, UTA staff, or volunteer) to him at utacanterbury@hotmail.com. You may write to the same address to be added to the e-mail list for schedules and event announcements.

Summer Camp Preseason Discount

The schedule for Summer Camp 2008 at Camp Crucis has been posted, and online registration is in full swing! Sign up and pay in full by Dec. 31 to receive a discount of as much as \$100 off the price of a camp session. For details, visit www.campcrucis.org.



TELET program for youth

One of the great mission fields of our country is our schools. And who better to take the message of a life in Christ into the schools and among their friends than our Christian young adults themselves!

But where does one begin? What can you say to make a difference? TELET trains young people how to bring up conversations about their faith, how to explain the Christian faith in a simple fashion, how to answer difficult questions, and how to invite others to believe as well.

On Friday and Saturday, Feb. 29 – March 1, 2008, the diocesan Evangelism Commission is sponsoring the first TELET evangelism training for young people from 15 to 20 years old. The overnight program will be held at Camp Crucis. For further information and early registration, contact Fr. Scott Wilson at All Saints', Weatherford, 817-596-8734.

New Testaments door-to-door on Dec. 30

Bishop Iker asks all Tarrant County congregations to support the CityReachers Scripture Distribution project on Sunday, Dec. 30. On that day, the Fort Worth Star-Telegram will distribute copies of the New Testament to 252,000 homes, along with the morning paper. Please pray for these households. To contribute, contact the Tarrant Baptist Association at 817-927-1911.

Camp Crucis banners

Every congregation was invited to bring a banner to the 60th anniversary celebration at Camp Crucis in September. If your congregation did not have this project completed at that time, it's not too late to participate. Camp Director Jason Bontke encourages every church in the diocese to donate a 3-foot-by-5-foot banner as soon as it is convenient. These flags will fly permanently from the roof beams in the camp dining hall.



Church building projects

Two of our congregations have building projects under way. St. Christopher's, Fort Worth, broke ground this summer for a new parish house and chapel. And St. Barnabas, in the Alliance area of north Fort Worth, broke ground in October for its own permanent church home. Currently the mission congregation meets at Lone Star Elementary School. Pictured at left, Bishop Iker receives enthusiastic assistance at the St. Barnabas groundbreaking. At right, auspicious gusts of summer wind lift the acolytes' streamers and the rector's stole on the parking lot at St. Christopher's.



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To submit to and comply with the current direction of the General Convention would mean for us to embrace a distortion of the Christian faith that our forebears would not recognize as a continuation of 'the Apostles' teaching and fellowship.' It would mean driving an even deeper wedge between us and the rest of the Anglican Communion, as well as other Christian bodies, who do not condone recent actions of the General Convention, but rather view them as schismatic and sectarian. We cannot act against our conscience and in violation of the faith once delivered to the saints."



In concluding their report, the Standing Committee wrote:

"We believe it is time for us to take action to secure our future as a diocese. We believe it is time to separate our diocese from General Convention religion and to join an orthodox Province of the Anglican Communion. However, we do not wish to compel any parish in the diocese to remain with us as we pursue this course of action. With Christian charity toward those who differ from the majority, we are offering an amendment to Canon 32 to provide a process whereby parishes may leave the diocese in an amicable and Christian manner."



As the pastor and chief shepherd of this Diocese, I want to underscore that point: The purpose of the proposed amendment to Canon 32 is pastoral. It is intended to provide a process and canonical means whereby a parish that determines that, in good conscience, it must separate from the Diocese, may do so with its buildings and assets. Each case, of course, will be slightly different. Every parish will find some who support the direction of the Diocese and some who oppose it, whatever path we choose. The proposed Canon provides a process that would allow for the possibility of reconciliation, and if that is not possible, then an amicable solution to the controversy, where the positions of all sides are respected. It is my fer-



vent hope that no parish will elect to pursue this course and that we will remain together in mission for the next 25 years and beyond. But if separation must come, let it be accomplished without rancor and litigation. Let it be done in a Godly manner, in charity and in peace. Let it be a parting of brothers and sisters in Christ. On numerous occasions I have said that I cannot make anyone leave the Episcopal Church, nor can I make anyone stay in the Episcopal Church. This is a very difficult time for all of us, and it does not help to demonize one another or to attack the integrity or motives of those who disagree with us. It is not a time for threats, intimidation, or coercion. It is a time for grace, cooperation, and mutual respect. The multiple lawsuits that have been filed across the United States by The Episcopal Church against good Christian people over the ownership of their church property are outrageous. It is a scandal to the Body of Christ, and it must stop! This is not the way Christians deal with one another.

Tomorrow morning, after our votes have been cast today, your local church will remain unchanged. You will have the same priest, same building, same Prayer Book, and all the rest, that you had last Sunday. And I would like to say a word of reassurance to all of you, if I may, that this also will be the most likely scenario next year, following a possible ratification vote on any proposals that we adopt on first reading today. Your church and your priest will still be there for you and your family. The liturgy and worship in your congregation will continue as it has in years past, edifying the faithful and giving glory to God. Any and all who wish to join us will still be warmly welcomed, and we will continue to reach out to the world about us in evangelism and witness to the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ. Do not be fearful; trust God to provide. Do not vote today out of fear, but out of conviction, in confidence and in faith.

On a personal note, last week I celebrated my 33rd anniversary of ordination to the sacred priesthood. I joyfully reaffirm before all of you my ordination

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vows “to be loyal to the doctrine, discipline, and worship of Christ as this Church has received them.” In the Spring, I will celebrate the 15th anniversary of my consecration to serve as your Bishop. I joyfully reaffirm before all of you that I will continue to “guard the faith, unity, and discipline of the Church,” to the best of my ability and with God’s grace. From time to time someone will ask, “Why don’t you just resign and go away and join some other church where you will be happy?” My reply is always the same; because I cannot forsake the faithful people of this Diocese. I cannot renounce the sacred vows I took when I was called by God to serve as your Bishop. I will not desert the flock that has called me to shepherd them in this Diocese. I will not cease to guard the faith. I will not forsake those who look to me for spiritual leadership and guidance. As Jesus himself said, it is the hireling who, when he sees the wolf coming, runs away and abandons the sheep. The good shepherd remains to defend and lead the sheep entrusted to his protection and care. I am not going to abandon the faithful of this Diocese in the midst of the assaults and threats being hurled at us for standing up for what we believe.

The controversies and divisions that confront us are not about me or about my role as Bishop. They are about the truth of the Gospel, the authority of the Bible, and the received teachings of the apostolic Church. My theological positions have not changed on any of the issues that are before us. Likewise, this Diocese has not deviated from the historic faith and order of the catholic Church. We are not the cause of division or schism; we are a part of the solution. We are a part of the realignment that is shaking up and reshaping the Anglican world. We are for preserving the unity of the Church and for mending the tear in the fabric of our beloved Communion. For all these reasons, our commitment to Christian orthodoxy must remain clear and unwavering. We will make common cause with all who



Bishop Iker's address was interrupted several times for applause.

share this faith, these values, and this mission. The proposals before this Convention have one clear message: We here in the Episcopal Diocese of Fort Worth intend to be who we have always been, to believe what we have always believed, and to do what we have always done. We will remain an orthodox diocese of catholic Christians, full members of the worldwide Anglican Communion. Above all else, we are committed to serving and obeying the Lord Jesus Christ, as we uphold the authority of the Holy Scriptures as the revealed Word of God and our ultimate authority in all matters of faith, morals and doctrine. If that makes us enemies of some, if that brings on threats and intimidations, if that brings on militant opposition – then so be it. We will face it together, as God gives us His grace and guidance.

My dream is for a day when we are not under attack by adversaries from within the same church or engulfed in endless religious controversies. I long to be a part of a Province that wants us and values our witness, instead of threatening us and isolating us as a “problem diocese.” My hope is for a time when we are not sidetracked from the mission of the Church by endless conflicts, so that we can be truly set free to focus on making disciples, planting new churches, building up the Body, equipping the saints for ministry, encouraging the faithful, and doing the work of Jesus Christ in the world. May God in His goodness hasten the arrival of such a day, such a time, and such a Church.

+ Jack L. Iker

Reflections on mission

Loving our neighbors in Malawi

by the Rev. Louis Tobola

Making the five-hour drive from Lilongwe International Airport, Malawi, to the Bishop's residence in Mzuzu, one has the unexpected response that you have seen all of this before: Africans walking on the road, carrying a day's firewood and/or a 100-lb. bag of maize on their head; grass and mud living structures too numerous to count; and people too thin from too little to eat. Within the quiet, comfortable transport of a Honda SUV, surrounded by companions from your world, it feels like you're watching television. Nothing can penetrate your comfortable reality. Until slowly day by day, hour by hour the demanding, harsh reality of African life settles upon you. And, once it does, unlike television, you can't turn it off.

I don't know who coined the phrase "Third World" to describe a country such as Malawi, which is the world's third-poorest nation. It is an inadequate phrase. The daily differences between our world and the people of Malawi are so great it



Fr. Tobola with children at the Lubagha School, Mbuju, Malawi

is as though they live on another planet. The daily expectations of our world can't find a place in theirs: clean water, medical care beyond First Aid, and food and its remarkable availability, 24/7. And yet amazingly, despite the chasm between these two worlds, there comes the most gracious, generous hospitality unequaled anywhere.

Wherever our mission team went we were greeted by smiling faces, joyous singing and always, a gift. The gift could be a handmade shirt, a fishing net, or a carefully prepared and solemnly served meal. Receiving such hospitality from those who have so

little for those who have so much challenged our imaginations. Could we grasp this experience of true hospitality?

The purpose of this mission trip was to strengthen the relationship between our diocese and the Diocese of Northern Malawi. While the Diocese of Fort Worth provides 90 per cent of the operating support for our companion diocese, sending money, while very important is not enough.

Strengthening relationships means sending people who by their presence say: You are important to us, you are necessary for our shared ministry, and you are not forgotten. In Malawi it is all about this relationship. To strengthen this relationship, we ministered to orphans who have lost both parents to AIDS; school children who attend class in mud school rooms under a grass roof; and, hospitals whose patients' suffering can be relieved only the slightest. And yet, within this context one discovers churches which have the most joyous worship one can experience. African music and dance has no peer. As an African Benedictine monk told me recently, "Other people need paper with notes and words so they can make music. For us, music is in our blood." I believe it is.

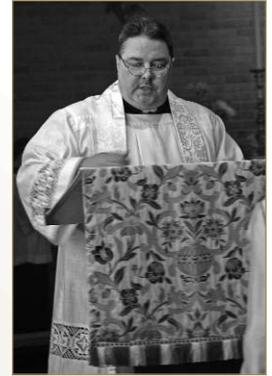
For those of us on this mission trip – Dr. Glen Petta (our team leader), Vince Osborne, Chad Fillmore, Rob Sell, Chad Nusbaum, Jonathan Duncan, the Reverends Davidson Morse, Stuart Smith, and myself – the decision to go was not made out of curiosity or a spirit of adventure. It was out of call. It was not our doing. It was Christ's. Having returned, we know the many needs of Africa cannot be addressed by one person. However, having found a new neighbor in the Diocese of Northern Malawi, it is that neighbor Christ commands us to love.

Fr. Tobola is the vicar of St. Barnabas the Apostle Church in the Park Glen neighborhood of north Fort Worth.

Celebrations



St. Timothy's, Fort Worth, celebrated the 50th anniversary of its founding with a Eucharist and sit-down dinner on Oct. 13. At left, Fr. Christopher Stainbrook presided in the presence of Bishop Iker. The preacher was Canon Charles A. Hough III, right, a son of St. Timothy's, who recalled a transforming worship experience from his boyhood that brought his faith to life.



Bishop Iker congratulates Canon John Heidt at the conclusion of the June 2 Eucharist celebrating the 50th anniversary of Canon Heidt's ordination.

Among those participating in the service was Fr. Michael Heidt, son of the Canon.



Mary Beth Hwang chanted the litany for the Holy Cross Day ordination of Fr. Randall Foster. Ms. Hwang also made the red chasuble, stole, and maniple in which Fr. Foster was vested. The new priest is chaplain of St. Vincent's School in Bedford.



A release of doves followed the Aug. 4 service of installation and institution for Fr. Kenneth MacKenzie (right) as rector of All Saints', Wichita Falls. Fr. MacKenzie previously served in the West Indies.



At the conclusion of his Sept. 8 ordination service, Fr. Chuck Hough (left) shares a laugh with his father, Canon Charles A. Hough. The new priest was ordained by his godfather, Bishop Iker, and is the curate at St. Mark's, Arlington.



Fr. Kingsley Jon-Ubabuco (right) passes the peace during his June 23 ordination service. Fr. Jonathan Ogujiofor preached the sermon at the service, which was held at St. Peter & St. Paul, Arlington. Fr. Kingsley is the vicar of St. Philip the Apostle Church in Arlington.

DIOCESAN CALENDAR - ADVENT/CHRISTMAS 2007

Boldface type indicates Bishop Iker's visitations • Unless otherwise indicated, all meetings are held at the Diocesan Center for Ministry

<i>January</i>		
<i>February</i>	12/8	8:30 a.m. Visionary Parenting Conference, at St. John's, Fort Worth
<i>March</i>	12/9	ST. MARK'S, Arlington
<i>April</i>	12/16	ST. GREGORY'S, Mansfield
<i>May</i>	12/17	9:30 a.m. Commission on Ministry 1:30 p.m. Standing Committee
<i>June</i>	12/19	10 a.m. Finance Committee
<i>July</i>	12/21	Diocesan Offices close at noon
<i>August</i>	12/23	ST. NICHOLAS, Dallas
<i>September</i>	12/25	The Nativity of Our Lord/Christmas Day
<i>October</i>	12/30	ST. PHILIP'S, Arlington
<i>November</i>	1/2	Diocesan Offices reopen
<i>December</i>		

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