

“This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him while we are walking in darkness, we lie and do not do what is true; but if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his son cleanses us from all sin.”

- 1 John 1:5-7

Sometime in 1982, a man named Enoch Christopherson visited All Saints, Bakersfield, California. Enoch was mayor of Turlock, California, about 150 miles north of Bakersfield; he was also an itinerant Pentecostal preacher. And so one Saturday night in 1982, the phone rang in the home of Fr. John Keester, rector of All Saints. The voice at the other end of the line said, “My name is Enoch Christopherson, and God told me to preach at your church tomorrow morning.” It’s probably a good thing that I wasn’t rector of All Saints yet. My response would have been, “Oh yeah? Says who?” Fr. John, however, is a much more flexible person than I am; so he said, “Let me pray about it, and I’ll get back to you.” Fr. John did indeed pray, and he sensed a “green light” from the Lord. So he called Enoch Christopherson and invited him to preach at All Saints the next day.

When I arrived at All Saints in 1986, people were still talking about Enoch’s sermon. Folks called it the “lighthouse prophecy”. Nobody remembered the details of the sermon, but he said something like this: that God had called All Saints Episcopal Church to be a lighthouse; that this light was to shine in Bakersfield and well beyond; and that people, many people, were going to be drawn to Jesus through the ministry of this congregation. During the last years of Fr. John’s tenure, and during all of mine, people at All Saints constantly reminded themselves of this calling. They held it up like a measuring line.

At first, no one knew what “lighthouse ministry” actually looked like. Gradually, over time, themes emerged. One was outreach, giving away money. When the church relocated in 1983, they sold the old property for a million dollars, tithed it, put \$100,000 in an outreach fund, and developed new property on the remaining \$900,000. In time, people began to see that “lighthouse ministry” meant more than money. It meant making ourselves available to Jesus. People took part in short-term mission trips – to Uganda, Kenya, China, Honduras, the Dominican Republic, Burundi, India, Mozambique, Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil, Myanmar. People got involved in a whole host of local ministries, from the rescue mission to a Christian outreach on junior high campuses. The lighthouse theme cropped up everywhere, and still does. We renamed our newsletter *The Beacon*. We put a huge banner in the entry of the church, a lighthouse surrounded by words of Jesus from the Sermon on the Mount: “Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven” (Matt. 5:16).

Fast forward – to November 7, 1999, two days after the election of the Seventh Bishop of Northern Indiana. God gave me a gift that day. Bishop Schofield, by divine accident, was scheduled to make his yearly visitation, and so I didn't have to preach. A good thing, too: my head still spun from the election, and I was only barely able to articulate. I hardly knew my name. As the sermon began, Bishop Schofield said, "You know, I was struck by your huge lighthouse banner in the entry." And then he turned around and said to me, "Ed, do you know what's on the seal of the Diocese of Northern Indiana?" "No," I said, "I'm afraid I've never noticed." Bishop Schofield said, "It's a lighthouse." The congregation gasped. I gasped. Maybe there's a theme here – not only for All Saints, Bakersfield; not only for Ed Little; but also for the Diocese of Northern Indiana. Maybe we're seeing the very fingerprints of God as he brings our lives together, yours and mine.

Now there's nothing especially startling about lighthouse imagery. Lighthouses are "in" these days. Every morning on the way to the office I drive by Lighthouse Baptist Church. Visit any Christian bookstore and you'll find lighthouse paintings, lighthouse lapel pins, lighthouse wrist watches. A couple of years ago, Sylvia and I spent a week on Cape Cod and discovered that there's a "lighthouse culture" out there, people who spend their vacations visiting lighthouses, photographing lighthouses, painting lighthouses. Our own lighthouse seal goes back to the brief period when we were the Diocese of Michigan City: there's a lighthouse in Michigan City. And yet . . . perhaps God has something for us here. I want to think with you about what it might mean for the Diocese of Northern Indiana to embrace the lighthouse image; to internalize it; to make it a sign of our ministry. And I'll do that by sharing four "core values," four essentials of "lighthouse ministry". They are

1. A passion for the Gospel of Jesus Christ
2. A heart for the lost
3. A willingness to do whatever it takes
4. A commitment to one another

First, *a passion for the Gospel of Jesus Christ*. "For we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake. For it is the God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4:5-6). That's St. Paul, describing his own ministry. I find myself asking, does it describe ours? Are we as saturated with the Gospel as Paul?

Eleven years ago, I made the first of three mission trips to Uganda. There I met Onesimus Mutahindukah. At that time, Onesimus was vicar of Bugolobi Parish in Kampala, located next to a run down housing development that had once served as barracks for Idi Amin's troops. The church building itself was a reed hut leaning precariously to one side, the congregation jammed into the nave and sitting on crude wooden benches or on the dirt floor. I've never known anyone like Onesimus. He's a small man, maybe five feet five inches tall, with a long, squared-off beard and piercing dark eyes. He reminds me of a black Moses or a black John the Baptist, intense and absolutely focused. The phrase Christ-centered applies to him in a way that it applies to no one else I've ever met. One day, for example, I walked with him into an outdoor market area near the housing development. I don't think Onesimus had a single conversation that didn't challenge people. "Hey, Philip, why weren't you in church? Is there something wrong with you and the Lord?" "Mary, how are things with you and Jesus?" And I found myself asking: Why can't I be like that? Why can't I burn with Gospel intensity? Why can't my love for Jesus spill over naturally into every conversation?

My encounter with Onesimus left me with a yearning, one that I share now with all of you. I yearn for every man, every woman, every child in the Diocese of Northern Indiana to know and love the Lord Jesus. I yearn for every man, woman, and child to be able to articulate the Gospel in his or her own words. Now here's the good news. It's already happening! I am incredibly blessed to know two of my predecessors, William C. R. Sheridan and Francis Campbell Gray, and to appreciate the depth of their love for Jesus. They've encouraged me enormously. I am also incredibly blessed to be bishop of a diocese with a strong Catholic heritage. For over a century, people have been meeting Jesus in the sacraments, in rich liturgical worship, in the Word of God faithfully preached. And I've been encouraged by ways in which Jesus is lifted up in congregation after congregation - through thorough and thoughtful catechesis; through evangelistic outreach programs like Alpha; through faithful preaching and teaching; through the reverent and joyful celebration of the Eucharist. And - here's the challenge - there's so much more. Jesus, I believe, is calling us more and more deeply into a relationship with him.

Second, *a heart for the lost*. Jesus said, "The Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10). Episcopalians don't naturally gravitate to language about salvation and being lost. We're more comfortable talking about helping people to discover the richness of the Anglican tradition. Now don't get me wrong. I love our tradition, I cannot imagine being another kind of Christian than an Anglican, I think I'm as Anglican as tea and crumpets. But the Gospel confronts us with a painful reality: without Jesus, we are lost. We can be rich, famous, talented, even religious; but without Jesus, we are lost - in St. Paul's words, ". . . without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world" (Ephesians 2:12).

Let me tell you about Henrietta - Sylvia's grandmother, which would make her (I suppose) my grandmother-in-law. I met Henrietta when Sylvia and I were courting in the 1960s, and frankly I was never comfortable around her. Henrietta, you see, was an occultist. She dabbled in spiritual experiences as varied as tarot card reading, fortune telling, ouija boards. She never met a religion she didn't try - except

Christianity, which she found boringly conventional. I did everything I could to avoid Henrietta at family gatherings, for two reasons. First, she was nearly deaf and I had to shout at her; and second, she always wanted to tell my fortune. I felt “icky” around her. Well, sometime in the early 80s, we got word that Henrietta was in a hospital in Oceanside, California, dying of pancreatic cancer. My initial reaction (I say this to my shame) was almost unconcern; until I began to get this sense down *here* that I was supposed to drive to Oceanside and visit Henrietta. I explained carefully to the Lord that Henrietta was virtually deaf, and that her heart was so hardened that there was no hope of winning her to Christ. But the feeling wouldn’t go away, and finally - reluctantly - I went. By the time I got to the hospital, Henrietta was in intensive care. The end was near, but she was completely conscious. After some initial chit-chat - of course, she couldn’t hear me at all - I put my mouth next to her ear and screamed, “HENRIETTA, DO YOU WANT TO RECEIVE JESUS AS YOUR LORD AND SAVIOR?” You could hear my voice echoing through the ICU. To my surprise, Henrietta said, “Yes.” And so I yelled a prayer into her ear - I can’t help wondering if maybe some others in the ICU got converted, too - and Henrietta became a child of God, an inheritor of the Kingdom, cleansed by the blood of Jesus. I will spend eternity with her.

My brothers and sisters, northern Indiana - I’m talking about the upper third of the state, not the diocese - is filled with Henriettas; people who are lost but don’t know it; people for whom the Good News of Jesus Christ will bring hope for this life and the next; people who are hungry, thirsty, needy. William Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury during World War Two, once said that the church is the only institution on earth which exists primarily for the benefit of those who are not its members. I believe that Jesus wants to soften our hearts, to sensitize them. We exist for the sake of the Henriettas. That, I believe, is why the Lord has called the Diocese of Northern Indiana into existence.

Third, *a willingness to do whatever it takes*. Here’s St. Paul describing his “philosophy of ministry”: “Though I am free with respect to all, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I might win more of them. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though I myself am not under the law) so that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (though I am not free from God’s law but am under Christ’s law) so that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, so that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some” (1 Cor. 9:16-22). Now Paul was a man of principle. He wouldn’t let go of essentials. All you have to do is to read, say, 1 Cor. 15, and you see that the death and resurrection of Jesus formed the non-negotiable center of his gospel; or read the letter to the Galatians, and you discover that Paul wouldn’t compromise on salvation by grace through faith. He was immovable on the essentials, flexible on the margins; no concessions on the content, incredible “give” on the packaging. He would do virtually anything to make Jesus known, to remove obstacles to the Gospel.

A few days ago, I had a conversation with a rector in the Diocese - I won't use his name or his parish - about his congregation, its programs and its Sunday liturgy. We were talking about the relationship between what goes on in his church and how his parish reaches the unchurched. We talked about worship and education and programs. At one point I asked him if his Sunday Eucharist includes a particular piece of ceremonial. It isn't even important what that ceremonial is: it's commonly but by no means universally done in Episcopal congregations, an optional observance. Some parishes in Northern Indiana do it, some don't. Anyway, I asked him if St. Swithin's did. "No," he said. "Why not?" I asked. He explained that his parish was reaching out to the population around the church building, young, unchurched families; and so he had carefully looked at every aspect of Sunday liturgy - from the opening hymn to the dismissal - asking the question: How effectively does this communicate the Gospel to people who do not yet know Jesus Christ? Now understand, this parish celebrates the Holy Eucharist Rite Two every week, with vestments, music, and a kind of middle range of ceremonies. I'm not recommending that anyone else mimic them. But I am saying that the question is very, very important: How effectively does this communicate the Gospel?

I believe that we need to be willing to look at every element of our life - as congregations, and as a diocese - from the perspective of that question. That would include

- What we do on Sunday morning
- How we spend our money, on a parochial and a diocesan level
- How we organize our lives
- How the Bishop spends his time and energy
- How deacons and priests spend their time and energy
- How we mobilize people for ministry

Frankly, it's much too early to proclaim anything definitive about where we'll come out in all of this. My point is to say that Paul is our model, his willingness to do anything within the scope of the faith once delivered to the saints - *anything* that would bring a needy world to Christ.

Fourth, *a commitment to one another*. Once more, St. Paul: "Just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body - Jews or Greeks, slaves or

free - and were all made to drink of one Spirit. Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. . . . The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you,' nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you.' . . . If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and individually members of it" (1 Cor. 12:12-13,21,26-27). Paul says that we're interconnected. We need each other. We can't go it alone. Jesus has linked us together.

Last August, when a team of three from the Episcopal Election Committee visited Sylvia and me in Bakersfield, I put a question to them. After three or four hours of conversation in which they had asked me about everything from my administrative and pastoral style to the way I deal with conflict, one of the team members said, "Now do you have anything to ask *us*?" I said, "Yes, one question. Are there any skeletons? Is there anything I need to know if I were to become your bishop?" And they said, "No, no skeletons. This is a diverse diocese, we've got a wide range of opinion on every conceivable issue, but people get along. The quality of relationships is good. What unites us is the person of Jesus Christ."

I've been in Northern Indiana for three and a half months now, long enough to discover that what the team told me is absolutely true. We are indeed diverse, more diverse even than I'd imagined. We've got smaller churches, larger churches, middle-sized churches. We've got churches that worship contemplatively and churches that worship exuberantly . . . churches that use lots of ceremonial and churches that are ceremonial minimalists . . . churches that sing virtually everything (including the rubrics and the announcements) and churches that sing only a hymn or two. If we took a survey of the Diocese, we'd discover enormous variety on many issues. But we are not, as so many dioceses are, polarized. Why? Because Jesus unites us. There's a sense in this diocese of collegiality, of people cherishing their relationships with each other. We enjoy being together. This is a wonderful building block for what lies ahead. We can't deepen our passion for the Gospel, we can't soften our hearts to a needy world, we can't look for creative, outside-the-box ways of sharing the faith, without a strong sense that we're in this thing together, and for the long haul. As I look ahead, there are two concerns that will probably dominate our diocesan life for the next ten years:

- How to enhance the ministry of smaller churches – which represent something like two-thirds of our congregations - how to encourage them, help them to discover their giftedness, assist them in their next stage of growth
- How to re-envision the Diocese - as the primary unit of Christian mission. mission.

These are enormous concerns! They will take our time, our energy, our creativity. And they will require that we commit ourselves to each other: which means listening, taking one another seriously, working on the assumption that the Holy Spirit may well speak through the most

surprising people. My brothers and sisters, I commit myself to you, and I bid you to commit yourselves to one another. None of us is here by accident. We are one body. We need each other.

I believe that the Lord Jesus has great things in store for the Diocese of Northern Indiana. He has already, and for more than a hundred years, used this diocese to extend his kingdom, to transform lives, to lift up his name. And he has more, much more, for us. He has called us to be a lighthouse: sharing the Gospel in wonderful and winsome ways . . . reaching out to those in peril . . . drawing people to Jesus, the source of Life.

*Sermon preached by Edward S. Little II
Seventh Bishop of the Diocese of Northern Indiana
on the occasion of his Seating at the Cathedral Church of St. James
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“I will give you as a light to the nations”

- Isaiah 49:6