

**Address to the 112th Convention
of the Diocese of Northern Indiana
October 23, 2010
St. Paul's, Munster, Indiana
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Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ

In his letter to the Ephesians, St. Paul paints an absolutely thrilling picture of the Church and its place in God's plan for the human race and for all creation. Here's what he says:

I have been made the servant of the gospel by a gift of grace from God who gave it to me by the workings of his power. I, who am less than the least of all God's holy people, have been entrusted with this special grace, of proclaiming to the gentiles the unfathomable treasure of Christ and of throwing light on the inner workings of the mystery kept hidden through all the ages in God, the creator of everything. The purpose of this was, that now, through the Church, the principalities and ruling forces should learn how many-sided God's wisdom is, according to the plan which he had formed from all eternity in Christ Jesus our Lord. In him we are bold enough to approach God in complete confidence, through our faith in him (Ephesians 3:7-12).

Paul is writing to a small, struggling congregation in the urban center of Ephesus, on what we would now call the western coast of Turkey. These Christians were neither rich nor powerful; they were ordinary, garden-variety people – mostly poor, some slaves, a mixed group of Jewish and Gentile converts to faith in Jesus Christ. And yet Paul tells these Ephesian Christians that the Church is the place where

Lives are transformed
God's plan unfolds
People encounter the presence and power of Jesus
Together, through Jesus, we have access to the Father

Even the angelic powers – the “principalities and ruling forces” – look with awe at what God is accomplishing in the Church: and not only in Ephesus, but in Fort Wayne, and Logansport, and Elkhart, and Angola, and Crown Point. What Paul says about the Ephesians he says about us. Keep that in mind as we take a broad sweep across the Diocese of Northern Indiana. The Bishop's Address is not simply a list of strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities (though it is indeed that); it's also a chance to think about what Jesus is accomplishing in and through us, how “God is working his purpose out, as year succeeds to year” (Hymn 534).

One of the most important actions at last year's convention in Plymouth was

the passage of a resolution calling for “the formation of an ad hoc committee to explore and develop future mission and ministry strategies in the Diocese of Northern Indiana.” The resolution’s explanation adds: “The parochial model of ministry we received from our forebears in the faith and have been operating under throughout our history as a Diocese is in significant distress. Many, if not most, of the parishes in the Diocese of Northern Indiana now struggle to maintain buildings, pastoral and administrative staff, and a full and vibrant program life.” So the resolution asks the committee to “look beyond the assumptions of a strictly parochial system, and to make recommendations concerning strategies for our future witness and mission.”

In other words, how can we organize ourselves for mission in the 21st Century? How can we do so effectively and efficiently, making the best use of our resources and putting those resources to work for the Gospel?

For the past year, the committee has been working diligently, under the leadership of Fr. Brian Grantz, Dean of the Cathedral of St. James, South Bend. At one point in the committee’s deliberations, we found ourselves thinking about the gifts we bring to this daunting task. First, as Anglican Christians, we’ve been blessed with a three-fold heritage:

- Catholic faith and order – deep historic roots, an experience of Jesus in liturgy and sacrament, a living connection to the apostolic church
- Evangelical zeal – commitment to the Scriptures as the ground of our faith, an encounter with Jesus’ redemptive work in his death and resurrection, a yearning to lead others to Christ
- Willingness to apply Catholic faith and order and evangelical zeal to the needs of our culture, and to address the questions for which men and women seek answers today

Second, our diocesan Core Values provide a framework for our ministry, and for the focus of any restructuring. As a diocese we embrace

- A passion for the Gospel of Jesus Christ
- A heart for the lost
- A willingness to do whatever it takes
- A commitment to one another

These are no mere platitudes. They are what the prophet Amos calls a “plumb line” (Amos 7:7), by which we measure everything that we do: how we handle our finances, how we organize and administer our parishes, how we make decisions about mission work, how we deploy ordained and lay ministers.

Third, the Actions for Congregational Transformation offer a vision for vibrant parish life. The ministry of every congregation should contain some mix of these

elements:

- Conversion – changed lives
- Evangelism – a wide embrace
- Local mission – touching the communities around our churches
- World mission – a global vision

But how do we bring all of that to a practical conclusion? How do we organize our lives in such a way that we can bring all of this to bear – our Anglican gifts, our core values, and our congregational actions? The Ministry Models Task Force has been working on this theme for the past year. I'll be saying a bit more about its work later in the address, and Fr. Brian will bring a report on its progress and plans this afternoon. But first we must look at

FACTS

Attendance. For the past three years, average Sunday attendance in the diocese has hovered around 2,300, down from a high of about 3,100 in 2001. In 2009 we experienced a slight uptick, an increase of 17.5 people per Sunday. Realistically, however, we must say that our attendance overall has been essentially flatline for three years. Certainly, there are parishes that are growing, some quite markedly, and others declining; but we aren't experiencing a general upward (or, for that matter, a general downward) trend. I do worry, however, about the numbers behind the numbers. While the diocese isn't shrinking, it is certainly aging. I walk into some churches, for example, and lower the average age in the building – a scary prospect indeed! A few clergy have noted that while they aren't losing parishioners, they notice that people seem to be attending church less regularly. People who used to come weekly might now attend two or three times per month; twice per month attenders now come only monthly. So the totaling of average Sunday attendance, even in its flatline status, doesn't tell the whole story. There are discipleship challenges behind the numbers: deepening our commitment to children and youth, for example, and re-committing ourselves to the Sunday Eucharist as the center, the organizing principle, of our Christian lives.

Counter-intuitively, I'm confirming a record number of people. For the past year, I've sensed that confirmation classes are larger; and recently Jon Adamson ran the figures for me. In 2010, with a couple of months to go, I have confirmed 128, more than in any previous year in my episcopate. All of this raises some interesting, and so far unanswered, questions about the relationship between confirmation and discipleship. If more and more people are getting confirmed, why don't we see that reflected in worship attendance? How might this affect the way that we prepare people for confirmation, and the commitment that we expect them to make when they take their confirmation vows?

Finances. One measure of the financial health of the diocese as a whole is the

number of requests that Diocesan Council receives for assessment reductions. Such a request means that a parish is not able to maintain its full level of programming, and also continue its commitment to the wider church. A few weeks ago, seven congregations asked Diocesan Council for such a reduction, the total about being about \$69,000. Diocesan Council always responds to these requests with understanding and compassion; but the 2011 budget – trim as it is, as you'll be hearing later – could not support all of those requests. In the end, Council pro-rated the reductions at about an 80% level. Even so, the very fact that assessment reduction requests totaled 8 or 9% of the budget means that both parishes and the diocesan structure are in financial distress. We simply are not able to support our current level of programming and staffing in the way that we've done for years.

As I look over the 2009 parochial reports, I also notice a troubling pattern, namely a huge variation in the average amount that parishioners are giving to their parishes. In one parish, for example, the average yearly pledge is about \$4400; in another, it's about \$900. While I realize that some of the variation has to do with the relative wealth of communities, it's also true that we have a long way to go when it comes to stewardship education. The biblical standard of giving is the tithe (Malachi 3:10 comes to mind, both a call for faithfulness in tithing and a promise of God's blessing and provision). Christian giving is proportionate (1 Corinthians 16:2); we give to the Lord in accordance with our income. Even if, initially, that proportion is just one or two percent, such giving can begin the process of working toward the tithe. All around the diocese, anxiety around finances is high; and while stewardship education is not a panacea, it is certainly an essential aspect of discipleship. In the end, our own giving, week in and week out, is the only way to provide for the needs of the parish and the diocese.

Facilities. I'm simply mentioning this by title; but in many churches, facility issues dominate every vestry meeting. This is no new information! Roof, heating, plumbing – many parishes have put off dealing with these, and then the issue can suddenly become pressing when the roof starts to leak or the boiler stops working. Handicap access is also a significant problem for many parishes, and the fix is often in the hundreds of thousands, or even the millions, of dollars. St. Timothy's, Griffith, recently installed an elevator to deal with its access challenge, and at a relatively modest cost. But other buildings are not so easily modifiable, and vestries face the daunting challenge of raising enormous amounts of money. Even some parish buildings built relatively recently, in the 1990s, are already showing signs of wear, and the question of ongoing maintenance and upkeep presents a huge burden to financially-strapped vestries still, perhaps, struggling to pay off the mortgage.

Two special cases. Because two ministry sites – a parish and a school – have drawn an unusual amount of attention from the bishop and diocesan staff, it's important that I report to you on our work and progress.

First, St. Paul's, Munster. As many of you know, St. Paul's moved from Hammond to Munster in the late 1980s, and built its parish hall in the early 1990s.

As you can see looking around you, it's the most sumptuous parish hall in the diocese, beautifully appointed and wonderfully adaptable. Unfortunately, it was also hugely expensive. For more than 15 years, the parish has been trying to pay down the mortgage; but, to date, the principal remains basically what it was when St. Paul's first encumbered itself. Under the bold and superb leadership of Fr. Ben Jones, the vestry of St. Paul's has been addressing this challenge for years and keeping the congregation informed every step of the way. Recently, a team that included both parish and diocesan leaders negotiated with the mortgage-holding bank and, in the short run, agreed on interest-only payments while St. Paul's works on its own financial structure. Meanwhile, the parish is raising funds for some essential capital improvements – a new roof, for example. Both parish and diocesan leadership are doing everything we can to save this building and to maintain the parish's ministry in this location. St. Paul's is a key part of our diocesan ministry, an "anchor" parish in the Calumet region, and a church that's both spiritually vibrant and energetically committed to mission. We don't want to lose its strong and unique witness. Please keep the leadership of St. Paul's in your prayers as they continue, with great courage and integrity, to address these issues.

Second, The Howe School (formerly known as Howe Military School). Since its founding in 1884, Howe has maintained a historic link with the Diocese of Northern Indiana, much to the benefit of the diocese as well as the school. The bishop serves as president of the board of trustees, an Episcopal priest is chaplain to the school, and worship is in accordance with the Book of Common Prayer. Four of my predecessors and their wives are buried in the crypt of St. James' Chapel. Many of you will remember the warm reception we received from administration, faculty, and cadets when Diocesan Convention met at Howe in 2007. But like many small military schools, Howe has struggled financially in recent years, with enrollment below the number of cadets needed for the school to sustain itself. And so the board has invested enormous amounts of time and energy in a process of renewing the school for a new century. The facilities have been updated (including wi fi throughout the campus!), the curriculum deepened and strengthened, and the quality of barracks life improved with the hiring and training of new resident advisors. The overall program has been significantly enhanced. In addition, the school is investing heavily in recruitment of new students, and reaching out (among other things) to our diocese and other dioceses. We've also had some helpful conversation on the board about what "Episcopal identity" means for a school like Howe, and how the school and the diocese can mutually enrich each other. The re-organization effort has been massive, and my own investment in the process has rightly consumed a good deal of my time and energy in recent months. The presence of a Howe booth at this convention is a sign of the effort. Please pray for the school, and welcome our guests enthusiastically.

INITIATIVES

Ministry Models Task Force. Among other things, our conversations have focused on two important realities. First, the diocese is the basic unit of the church,

and parishes are in essence mission outposts of the diocese. This has enormous implications. It means that we're in this thing together; that what happens in Kokomo affects the quality of life in Chesterton; that developing a common vision for ministry is no optional extra, but an essential element of the Christian life. When St. Paul talks about the Church in the Ephesians passage, he means more than the local congregation. He means that the Church is a worldwide body, spanning the globe and spanning time, and we're all interconnected. Second, the principle of subsidiarity means that ministry happens most effectively on the local level. That sounds contradictory, doesn't it? But it isn't a contradiction, it's two sides of the same spiritual coin. We need one another, around the diocese and indeed around the world; but in the end, most Christians experience the Body of Christ in its local setting. In 1 Corinthians 12, when St. Paul talks about the Body and its gifts, he's referring to the local community. "Christ's body is yourselves, each of you with a part to play in the whole" (12:27). So the purpose of the diocesan structure is to help the diocese as a whole to develop a common vision for mission, and then to enable that vision to find expression in our diverse local settings.

Over the next months, the Ministry Models Task Force will be looking at examples around the nation of creative solutions to the challenge of providing ministry in an era of reduced resources. It will also be soliciting input from you about your own hopes and fears, dreams and concerns. At next year's diocesan convention, the task force will bring specific proposals for your consideration.

CDI, or Church Development Institute. We're just completing our third year of a diocesan-wide congregational development initiative. About 18 parishes – that's half of the congregations in the diocese – have participated. CDI involves four weekend training sessions per year on a two-year cycle. We're just completing our third year, which means that we're about to graduate our second "class". In addition, participants do an enormous amount of reading, and then undertake projects in their own parishes. Canon SuzeAnne Silla, who joined our diocesan staff with a special portfolio in congregational development, spearheads CDI, and has brought energy, expertise, and enthusiasm to the task. We've noticed at least two important benefits from the program. The first is networking. Leaders all around the diocese are discovering that they're not alone. They share challenges in common with brothers and sisters in very different contexts, and the mutual encouragement alone has been tremendously productive.

Second, CDI provides practical training in leadership skills. Already, clergy and lay leaders report that they have applied these skills in their local settings – resolving conflict, working on goals, making concrete plans. In other words, CDI helps to create more effective leaders, an essential element in our ongoing mission work. If your parish has not yet signed up for CDI, I encourage you to do so right away. The next cycle begins in February.

Two new committees. This past year, we've appointed two new leadership groups in the diocese to assist parishes in concrete ways. The first is the Property

and Loan Committee. Its membership includes attorneys, contractors, and people with real estate and financial expertise. This committee is available to assist congregations contemplating a building project, and is ready to provide advice on the full range of issues, from determining if a parish can responsibly secure a loan to looking at the particulars of the proposed project. The committee will also advise the Standing Committee about these matters. When a parish intends to take on a mortgage or sell property, the canons require that the Standing Committee give its approval. At any given moment, of course, the Standing Committee may or may not include in its membership people with skills in finances. And so the Property and Loan Committee will provide expert counsel, and will assist the Standing Committee in making its decisions. Canon SuzeAnne Silla chairs the Property and Loan Committee.

Second, the Legacy Planning Committee was also formed this past year, with a focus on assisting parishes to deepen their financial base. Chaired by Kate Lee of the Cathedral of St. James, South Bend, the committee has two primary areas of focus: to assist parishes in setting up endowment funds for their own long-range financial stability, and to offer wills clinics around the diocese and thus provide information to parishioners about the disposal of their assets. This second mandate has its origin in the Prayer Book. Clergy are “directed to instruct the people, from time to time, about the duty of Christian parents to make prudent provision for the well-being of their families, and of all persons to make wills, while they are in health, arranging for the disposal of their temporal goods, not neglecting, if they are able, to leave bequests for religious and charitable uses” (BCP, p. 445). The Legacy Planning Committee intends to give practical expression to this Prayer Book instruction, and in that way to offer parishes an important avenue toward a more stable financial base.

Diocesan finances. Earlier in this address I mentioned that both parishes and the diocesan structure itself are experiencing a time of diminishing resources and resulting financial stress. The fact that assessment reduction requests total \$69,000 means that something isn’t working! Over the past few months, both the diocesan staff and Diocesan Council have recognized that we need to make significant changes in how we do business. Among other things, over the next year we’re going to explore the possibility of lowering the assessment rate from its current 15.999% to (perhaps) a flat 15%, and at the same time lower the amount available for assessment reductions. It would be better, I think, to increase everyone’s available operating income, and at the same time to ask parishes to live as much as possible within that income. We’re also looking at a renovation of our diocesan budgeting process and to move toward a “zero-based budget”. Instead of simply taking last year’s budget and, in essence, tinkering with it, we’ll start with a blank sheet of paper and ask: What do we need to be doing, in order to provide effective ministry on a diocesan level? What’s really essential? Our diocesan Finance Committee chair, Doug Kroll, will be directly involved in these conversations, as we seek new and creative ways to allocate our resources.

Staff reorganization. Meanwhile, we are already taking significant steps to reduce our overall expenses on a diocesan level. The most important is a reorganization of the staff at 117 North Lafayette. For years, we've had an "upstairs staff" of four: the bishop, the canon, the treasurer (who also serves as office manager and, under a separate heading, as director of the Wawasee Conference Center), and the bishop's secretary. In addition, several part-time employees serve in youth ministry and in our ordination process. With Sharon Katona's retirement, we're reducing the "upstairs staff" from four to three. Jon Adamson, currently the bishop's secretary, will take over much of Sharon's work, and will be re-styled as diocesan administrator. Because we're doubling his responsibilities, you'll notice that Jon's salary will appropriately increase. The other staff salaries remain unchanged, for the second year in a row. With this reorganization, I believe that we have the minimum number of full- and part-time staff to provide essential services for the diocese.

Michigan City. I wasn't sure where to place this particular initiative. I could have included it under the heading of "Two special cases" earlier in the address, thus raising the number to three; but it seems to me that the Michigan City process reflects a congregation-based initiative to do ministry in a new way; and so I've put it in its own category.

Last spring, leaders from Trinity Church, Michigan City, approached me with a proposal: that the two Michigan City parishes – Trinity and St. Andrew's by-the-Lake – reunite to form a single congregation, for the sake of more effective mission. They have had a separate existence since 1956, when a group of Trinity parishioners formed a new parish in the Long Beach area of the city. Recently, both have struggled financially, and neither parish is served by a priest on a full-time basis. Both, too, have significant facility issues. Trinity's property, of course, is beautiful, historic, and much in need of updating. St. Andrew's, on the other hand, worships in a newer building; but it too is showing many signs of wear. Trinity's congregation is about twice St. Andrew's, but neither congregation is fully self-sufficient. And so a group of Trinity leaders asked me: Is it time for us to reunite?

Since early summer, we've been holding a series of gatherings – first with groups of leaders from each parish, then a joint meeting of these leaders, then a joint vestry meeting, and most recently back-to-back all-parish meetings on consecutive evenings. We've made good progress, but much work remains. It is no easy thing to blend two rather different church cultures into a single institution. Many issues – financial, liturgical, missional – are still unsettled. There is overall assent in both parishes to the idea a blended congregation, but the precise form and shape is still a work very much in progress. Please keep the parishes in your prayers as they explore the possibility of life together. Pray for wisdom, discernment, and a sense of the Spirit's timing in the entire process.

Resolutions. We will be dealing later in this convention with two pre-submitted resolutions. The first has to do with a new version of Title IV in the

canons of the Episcopal Church and some necessary changes in our own diocesan canons. Title IV is the section of canon law that deals with church discipline. When a deacon, priest, or bishop commits an act of misconduct, the church has a set of protocols, canons, in place so that we can respond in a firm yet loving manner. In the earlier version of Title IV, an Ecclesiastical Trial Court stood at the center of this response. The revision transforms the Court into a Disciplinary Board, and expands its membership. The new version of Title IV is more complex, and requires a larger number of personnel for its administration. But the revision does provide for the possibility that contiguous dioceses might join together and create a single Disciplinary Board – widening the personnel base for staff and maintaining the structure that Title IV mandates.

And so the dioceses of Northern Indiana and Indianapolis hope to do just that. Over the course of several months, the bishops, chancellors, and canons to the ordinary of the two dioceses held a series of conference calls, and the result is the resolution you have before you. What it does is to offer a structure so that Northern Indiana and Indianapolis can work together in disciplinary matters, thus lessening the burden somewhat. Obviously, my hope is that the Disciplinary Board will never have to meet! But it's important that we have the structure in place, and this seems to be the most efficient way of accomplishing that end. The resolution provides the needed changes in our diocesan canons.

I should add that the new Title IV is far from perfect. Several of you have noted that, among other things, the new version significantly expands the power of the diocesan bishop in disciplining priests and deacons, and significantly expands the power of the presiding bishop in disciplining bishops, removing some checks and balances in the old Title IV. I agree with these concerns, and will work with our General Convention deputies in seeking a revision of the new Title IV when General Convention meets in 2012. In the meantime, however, it's essential that our diocesan canons – and the persons we elect today – put us in line with Title IV as it currently stands. Otherwise, we would have no disciplinary structure in place, should the need tragically arise.

The second pre-filed resolution has to do with diocesan finances. For many years, our diocesan budget has paid the Medicare supplement for clergy who retire from the diocese after a minimum of ten years of service here. This is, admittedly, an unusual benefit; very few dioceses provide it for their retired clergy. It's been a joy for us to do so, in large part because we're so grateful for the sacrificial way that so many of our clergy have served for years. Unfortunately, however, it simply isn't possible for us to maintain this benefit. Paying for the Medicare supplement is taking up a larger and larger portion of our operating budget, and that at a time of reduced resources. So the Finance Committee and Diocesan Council have submitted a resolution that eliminates the benefit for clergy coming to the diocese after its adoption. Those currently receiving the benefit will continue to do so, and clergy who now serve in the diocese will be eligible for the benefit if they retire from the diocese after at least ten years of service here. The resolution will only impact those

who come to Northern Indiana after the resolution's adoption. As sad as it makes me, I believe that it's necessary for us to take this step, and to follow the practice of other dioceses.

Signs of life and growth. In listing the challenges we face, and the initiatives we're undertaking, it's important to note that great things are happening in the Diocese of Northern Indiana.

First, vocations to the diaconate and priesthood continue to flourish. This past year, Greg Wilde and Clark Miller were ordained to the priesthood – Fr. Greg now serves as associate at Trinity Church, Columbus, Georgia, and Fr. Clark as priest-in-charge of Trinity, Logansport. I also ordained Tom Haynes to the transitional diaconate; his ministry encompasses St. Elizabeth's, Culver, and the Culver Academies. Two others (Terri Bays from Trinity, Michigan City, and Dusty Fecht from Gethsemane, Marion) are studying full-time in seminary (Terri at Berkeley-Yale, and Dusty at Duke Divinity School). We're also training four persons locally for the diaconate (Kathy Christensen and Paul Greve from Trinity, Fort Wayne; Clay Berkely from St. David's, Elkhart; and Anne Wietstock from St. James' Cathedral, South Bend), as well as Michelle Walker from St. Andrew's, Michigan City, and Michael Dwyer from St. Christopher's, Crown Point, for the priesthood. Several other people are in the discernment process as they explore the possibility of a call to the priesthood or the diaconate. Our hard-working Commission on Ministry, chaired by Anne Donnelly of St. Alban's, Fort Wayne, supervises those in discernment and formation.

This represents something of a shift in numbers between those going off to seminary and those training locally. Until recently, the two groups were fairly evenly balanced. Now, at least for the moment, our local formation program is growing, and the group going off to seminary is shrinking. (I should add that several of the people considering our discernment process will be seminary-bound; so we can anticipate another shift in the relatively near future.) Fr. Henry Randolph, rector of St. David's, Elkhart, serves as our diocesan vocations director, and oversees the entire process leading to ordination – from discernment to formation – and also watches over the immense amount of paperwork that the ordination process requires. Fr. Ted Neidlinger, associate at St. Andrew's, Kokomo, directs our local Formation Group, wonderfully assisted by Archdeacon George Douglass and Fr. William Forrest, OSB, of St. Gregory's Abbey, Three Rivers, Michigan. I am profoundly grateful to all of them. Our ordinands are receiving superb care.

Second, our diocesan youth program also continues to flourish. The primary focus is on three youth camps. The young people's camp – for third through eighth graders – focused on the theme of "Water World" (with all of its biblical associations), under the superb leadership of Tamisyn Grantz and Tim and Kim Gray, assisted by an enthusiastic and energetic staff. As always, it was a joy to immerse myself in camp life. In many ways, the week of diocesan summer camp is perhaps my most relaxed of the year. I simply "hang out," enjoy the ambience, and schmooze with the

kids and with staff. Carol Bianchini of St. Anne's, Warsaw, led our second camp, for high school youth. This year's theme was the Parable of the Good Samaritan, with young people discovering what it means for Jesus to stretch and challenge us. I also spent a day at this camp, teaching and simply being there with future diocesan leaders. Carol will also be leading a winter retreat for high school youth, and also coordinating our diocesan presence at the Episcopal Youth Event next summer. Finally, we offered Camp New Happenings for the third year in a row. This camp is aimed at the children of inmates, and drew young people from east to west, from Fort Wayne to Gary. Charlotte Strowhorn of St. Augustine's, Gary, spearheads the committee that oversees Camp New Happenings, and Mose Carter returned as director. This camp is an opportunity for us to provide a positive and Christ-centered experience for children whose lives are often bleak and hopeless. I'm deeply grateful to Charlotte, her committee, and everyone who gives so unselfishly for this effort. Incidentally, the Episcopal Church recently designated Camp New Happenings as a Jubilee Ministry, a great honor indeed, and the Northwest Indiana Quality of Life Council gave Charlotte its Outstanding Contribution Award for her work with Camp New Happenings.

And now a word of challenge. I mentioned earlier that the diocese is the primary unit of the church, but that (at the same time) people experience Christian life on the local level. So, in addition to our diocesan-level youth ministry, we also need to pay close attention to youth ministry in our local congregations. Sometimes this is enormously difficult, especially when a parish only has one or two youth in its membership. We need to think creatively, perhaps combining youth ministry from several neighboring parishes, perhaps (as happens, for example, in Plymouth) gathering youth together from a variety of Christian churches. Vibrant, life-changing youth ministry is an essential component of a vibrant and growing church.

A couple of items by title. Last year I mentioned that we have two areas of ministry where we're experiencing a good deal of life and growth – Latino ministry at St. Thomas', Plymouth; and college/university ministry at Gethsemane, Marion, and in the parishes in the South Bend area. Both continue to flourish. The economy, of course, has had an enormous impact on the Hispanic work at St. Thomas', since the Spanish-speaking congregation is affected in powerful ways by the ups and particularly the downs of our economy. Fr. John Schramm puts enormous energy into this work, and this year Diocesan Council has encouraged St. Thomas' to apply to our Congregational Revitalization and Development Fund for a grant to assist in this important missionary venture. College/university ministry continues to touch both graduate students and undergrads and, in the case of Gethsemane, Marion, has produced three priestly vocations. I continue to be convinced that the Anglican expression of the Christian faith is uniquely able to speak to students, and to offer a Christian voice that is strong, historic, Christ-centered, and willing to engage their questions.

THE WIDER PICTURE

A bishop's address would be incomplete, I'm afraid, without a mention of the ongoing struggles in the Episcopal Church and the wider Anglican Communion. Since our last diocesan convention, primary conversation has focused around the Anglican Communion Covenant.

You will remember the general sequence of events. In 2004, the Lambeth Commission issued the Windsor Report, a document that outlines Anglican ecclesiology and offers steps to repairing the breaches in the Anglican family and seeking the deepest level of communion possible, given our divisions. Among other things, the Windsor Report recommends the development of an Anglican Communion Covenant, a document that would give more precise shape to our common life across the 38 provinces of the Communion. Over the next five years, the Covenant has gone through several drafts, and the Anglican Consultative Council (the Communion's "vestry") recently commended it to the provinces for adoption. It will now be up to the highest decision-making body in each province to adopt or reject the Covenant.

The Covenant itself is presented in four sections, plus an introduction, outlining the nature of our communion with one another; the faith we hold in common, affirmations regarding the interdependent life of a global Communion, and the commitments that we make by entering freely into a covenantal relationship. The final section is the most controversial, since it outlines procedures when a member province of the Communion declines to accept the counsel of the Instruments of Communion (the Archbishop of Canterbury; the Lambeth Conference; the Anglican Consultative Council; and the Primates' Meeting). The bulk of the conversation about the Covenant is certainly centering on this final section.

A year ago, I joined a group of seven bishops who visited the Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams at Lambeth Palace in London. Among other things, we asked him to clarify what it means for a province to "adopt" the Covenant. Archbishop Rowan made a distinction between "adoption" and "endorsement". A province, he said, may adopt the document, and indeed the ACC has specifically sent the Covenant to provinces for such action. To date, two provinces have done so: Mexico and Southern Africa. Dioceses, on the other hand, are certainly free to endorse the Covenant and to urge their provinces (in the Episcopal Church's case, that would mean General Convention) to adopt it. The question we face in this diocese, of course, is whether our own decision-making body, Diocesan Convention, should endorse the Covenant.

At our annual spring clergy conference last May, we focused on the ministry of reconciliation, and in particular how that ministry might inform the way that we deal with discussion centering on the Anglican Communion Covenant. Our diocesan Reconciliation Task Force – chaired by Fr. Jim Warnock of Gethsemane, Marion, and assisted at the clergy conference by members of the parallel task force from the Diocese of Los Angeles – led the discussion. It was a helpful and positive

engagement, and among other things we found ourselves thinking about some sort of resolution that might create a “win/win,” at once endorsing the Covenant and at the same time recognizing our unconditional commitment to the Episcopal Church. But such a resolution, with whatever level of compromise is necessary, is a long way off, and much work remains to be done before we’re ready to craft such a document. We might, if circumstances seem right, consider such a possibility at next year’s diocesan convention. Meanwhile, we are going to be engaged in the coming months in an intentional time of education regarding the Anglican Communion Covenant. As a first step, on Saturday, January 22, we’re offering a “Covenant Teaching Day” at St. Michael’s, South Bend, with two speakers – one (Dr. Christopher Wells, editor of *The Living Church*, and a former communicant of this diocese) who believes that the Covenant is the best way forward for the Communion; and a second (Dr. Don Reed, professor at Wittenberg College and a deputy from the Diocese of Ohio) who has questions about the Covenant in its current form. In this way, we hope to have a balanced conversation, and to help us to come to grips with the complex dynamics that surround the Covenant. Please make plans to attend this important teaching day.

Please remember as well the context of this conversation, namely the ministry of reconciliation. When the current iteration of our Anglican conflict first erupted in 2003, I remember citing Rabbi Ed Friedman at a House of Bishops press briefing: “Be clear about your convictions, and stay connected.” Both sides of the equation are essential. We must be true to conscience and to our deepest theological commitments – and I well realize that in this room those commitments represent a spectrum of thought when it comes to the difficult issues we face. But at the same time we must commit ourselves to one another; to reach out to people with whom we profoundly disagree; and to build bridges across the theological divide. We do this, not simply to be “nice,” but for the sake of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, for the sake of our Christian witness in the northern third of the state of Indiana. Remember St. Paul’s words to his Christian friends in Ephesus, words wonderfully apt for our diocese, for the Episcopal Church, and for the Anglican Communion:

I have been made the servant of the gospel by a gift of grace from God who gave it to me by the workings of his power. I, who am less than the least of all God’s holy people, have been entrusted with this special grace, of proclaiming to the gentiles the unfathomable treasure of Christ and of throwing light on the inner workings of the mystery kept hidden through all the ages in God, the creator of everything. The purpose of this was, that now, through the Church, the principalities and ruling forces should learn how many-sided God’s wisdom is, according to the plan which he had formed from all eternity in Christ Jesus our Lord. In him we are bold enough to approach God in complete confidence, through our faith in him (Ephesians 3:7-12).

Let us pray.

Come, Holy Spirit,

and renew us in the fire of your love.

Fill us with holy expectancy
as we gather in the name of Jesus.

Give us a passion for the Gospel,
a heart for the lost,
a willingness to do whatever it takes,
and a commitment to one another.
Enflame us, embolden us, empower us
as disciples who make disciples
for Jesus' sake.

Amen.