

Bishop Klusmeyer's 2010 Convention Address

Dear Faithful Christians in the Diocese of West Virginia. Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

As we gather here this weekend for the life and ministry of the Diocese of West Virginia, we are also reminded of recent events within our common life.

First, today is the anniversary of the attack on the World Trade Centers, the Pentagon, and the flight that crashed in Pennsylvania. Memories are still fresh, and like (for those of us who are old enough to remember) the assassination of President Kennedy, we will all remember exactly where we were when we heard the news of the attacks, 9 years ago, today.

Unfortunately, as the memories are fresh so are many feelings about how best to continue to respond. Prayer? Further military actions? Diplomacy?

Ultimately the Prince of Peace must rule in our hearts.

I ask your prayers for all those who have leadership responsibilities in our world – for wise judgment and careful, considered actions. Inflaming passions and working people into frenzies are never good, for the peace of the World. Episcopalians are known for our tolerance of differing views, and the encouragement to enter into conversation. May we carry this forth, in our lives – by word and by example.

As we gather here, I ask your prayers for our sister, the Reverend Siobhan Patterson, who was to have surgery for renal cancer, this past week. The surgery was postponed and will take place soon, we pray. It goes without saying that she is certainly very ill, and needs our prayers. God has provided various opportunities for her recovery, including excellent doctors, new medicines, and this Community of Faith and Friends who regularly hold her in their prayers.

I also ask your continued prayers for the Reverend Keith Butler, who died suddenly last month. I ask your prayers for him, and for his family. Obviously we were all stunned and surprised by his death, and we pray also for the congregations in the Greenbrier/Monroe Episcopal Ministries.

I believe that Keith has now heard those words we would all long to hear someday: “Well done, good and faithful servant.” Rest in peace, our friend.

Unfortunately, it is a reminder of the frailty and uncertainty of life.

Also, as we gather, I want to thank, again, those who have worked so hard for the Diocese of West Virginia. As I’ve mentioned in the past, they are often referred to as the ‘Bishop’s Staff,’ and they may be. However, they are the staff for the Diocese...Diocesan Staff, who work hard to assist congregations throughout the Diocese. Let me be clear – they are not here (none of us are) to fix problems. Rather, they are here to help guide, lead, assist and walk with you along the path that Christ calls us to walk.

I first want to thank Gwyn and Mollie, who keep the home fires burning. Their time and energies help us/free us to be out in the field, or to press on to the next appointment.

I thank David and Annette, who have worked so hard to make sure that the money that comes in and goes out, is properly accounted for. This year, for the second time in a LONG TIME, we had a clean audit. No exceptions, no concerns, no problems. That is an achievement that I longed for, when I first arrived!

Jason, and now Stephen Day also, serve for the youth and young adults in the Diocese. It has not been easy, as many of our youth are not able to transport themselves, and so travel at the pleasure of their parents or others, to get to activities. Jason has worked hard for the Summer Camps, as well as connecting to the youth and schools of higher education in West Virginia. This year, Diocesan Council approved the hiring of a second person, which was presented by the College and Young Adult Commission. Stephen Day was hired to share the load. For their respective responsibilities – Stephen will concentrate on Youth and Young Adults in the Western and Southern part of the Diocese, while Jason will concentrate on the Northern and Eastern parts. We can expect to see youth activities, such as retreats, ski trips, Happening, and more, as well as a strengthened Peterkin experience for everyone.

Faith and Donald. They are probably the most visible of the staff. Ministry Development and Congregational Development are vital to the lives of our congregations. These are integrally related, and yet they are separate, as they require both individual and systemic changes to take place, to allow God’s grace to permeate who we are. It is not enough to just ‘have a priest’ at the altar, if the congregation is not

systemically set to allow God's grace to function freely and lovingly in each location and context. Donald and Faith have worked hard to respond to the needs and challenges of the congregations, groups, commissions and beyond, to open the channel of God's grace in our midst.

I thank Daisy, Sarah and Lori, who make sure that our para-church ministries continue to flourish. Lori dreams about ways in which we can better reach the people of McDowell County. Daisy continues to reach out to various groups to welcome them to Peterkin, as well as making sure that Peterkin Camps are run smoothly and faithfully. And Sarah always extends a gracious welcome to everyone who enters the doors of Sandscrest.

I thank the Trustees of this Diocese, along with Charlie Hunsaker, who have worked diligently in a very difficult financial environment, to make sure that the ministries of the Diocese are properly and responsibly funded. Charlie, especially, has made extra efforts to be present, physically, spiritually and psychologically, even while trying to enjoy his retirement.

And I thank the Chancellors – John Hussell, Tyler Dinsmore and Karen Jenkins, for their tireless counsel, for their legal wisdom, and for their time spent on behalf of the Diocese. Words cannot adequately express my deep appreciation for their time and wisdom!

And today I want especially to thank Betsy Walker, who for 20 years was the editor of the Dayspring. She retired from that post this past year, but I want to say that she did an exceptional job! She worked hard,...and lovingly put together every edition of the Dayspring in such a way that the life of the Diocese, and the good works being done, were highlighted and showcased. She, the Dayspring and various contributors won numerous Polly Bond awards, as a sign of the superb work she has done. Betsy – THANK YOU!!!!

I have only just returned from a month of vacation and a month of my sabbatical. This is the first sabbatical I've had in more than 30 years of ordination, and I have to say that either I flunked sabbatical, or I have to readjust my expectations of what a sabbatical was to be, for me.

I had hoped to visit tiny and different congregations around the Church – to experience their hospitality and mission. Instead, I found that this month of sabbatical was a time to be with my wife and family...something that has eluded me for much of the past 9 years. Marsha and I moved Anna to Milwaukee,

for her to begin her new job. Then we traveled to Bogota, to visit with our Companion Diocese of Colombia. I spent a few days at a conference on “joy” with the Old Catholics. I was going to visit Willow Creek – purported to be the largest Church/congregation in the USA, and decided to cancel that because of the death of Father Butler. Then, for the last week, I went to Seattle to experience and talk about the Emerging Church phenomena.

I also attended a Church whose website declared that it practiced ‘Radical Hospitality.’ I was intrigued. When I arrived at the Principle Eucharist, I was handed a bulletin, and told “Hello.” Someone else shook my hand and said, “Nice to see you.” I went to my pew. No one greeted me, except at the Peace. At the end, I stepped out of my pew – looked around, and waited for a few moments. I walked out, without another word spoken to me by anyone. So, at this point, I’m not sure what ‘Radical Hospitality’ is all about – but I know it should be done.

It was an extremely interesting few days, and I’m still trying to wrap my mind around the concept of the Emerging Church.

I will take the balance of my sabbatical mid-2011, when I hope to travel to Africa, Brazil and follow up on the visits to different expressions of ministries in the US. Bishop Peterkin was the first US bishop to visit Brazil, on behalf of the Episcopal Church, to plant the seed there, and I have been invited by the Primate of Brazil to come and see what I (one) West Virginia did!

Again, I thank everyone on the staff for keeping the life of the office intact, while I was away. In addition to being able to spend time with Marsha and the family, the sabbatical also gave me the opportunity to reflect on what I’ve been doing, and what has been happening around the Diocese.

And I thank all of you! For your faithful care of the Churches you attend, for your prayers and witness to the Grace of God in our midst. I thank you for the hopefulness I see in your eyes and in your spirit. I thank you for sharing your journey with me, and with others around you.

When I arrived here, I was clear – it’s all about the kids! I used to say that McDonalds has it right. Focus on the kids (through their Happy Meal) and the adults will follow. Let me be clear, again – it is all about the kids in this Diocese!

In addition, it's also about Congregational Development! That means that we're to focus on the life, evangelism, stewardship and worship life of congregations! Too often we focus on our own survival, and not on doing the mission that Christ has called us to do.

How do we live the Gospel life? In the Emerging Churches, they don't want to DO Church. They don't want Church just to be from 10 -11 on Sunday mornings, or even at any pre-set time (like a weekday Mass). They don't even want to do Church on Sundays, followed by a Bible Study sometime during the week, unless that Bible Study radically alters who they are, and how they interact in the world. "Faith without works is dead," would probably be their rallying cry, and it should be ours as well! Rather, they want the Faithful to BE (!) Church, every hour, every day! How do they Incarnate the Presence of Christ in all they do?

That's what congregational vitality is all about – BEING THE CHURCH – being the Body of Christ in the world! AT ALL TIMES!!!

In "Tales of a Magic Monastery," the guest to the Monastery forgot to bring his Bible. The guestmaster tells him to write his own Bible...something of your own on the order of the Bible. "You could tell of a classical bondage, and the great liberation...ought to be much more interesting than just reading someone else's Bible." "It took me a month. I never learned so much about the official Bible. When I was finished, he recommended I take it home and try to live according to it for a year. " I couldn't tell anyone. It was quite a year. "I had never put so much energy and alertness into living by the official Bible as I was putting into living by this one. And my daily meditations had never been so concentrated."

A year later, he returned. His last day at the Monastery, the guestmaster told him to throw his Bible into the fireplace. "Afterwards he set me to work writing another Bible. And so it went, these past 40 years. Each year a new Bible, a new journal, and then at the end of the year – into the flames."

Can you do that? Can you know the Bible so well that it becomes a daily challenge to living out the Gospel? To be so alive and relevant to your life that you can take no actions without first being confronted by the Bible? Live the power of the Bible – pray the power of the Bible, in such a way that your life is changed, and the life of your congregation is energized for the Gospel of Jesus Christ?

And finally, the third aspect of who we are as a Diocese is that we are a worshipping community! Our Liturgies must be inspiring and bring a piece of the Kingdom of God nearer to our people.

There is a website called the “Ship of Fools” which regularly evaluates congregations on Sundays. Two of their questions that are always answered are: “Which part of the service was like being in Heaven?” and “and which part was like being in...er...the other place?” Our liturgy should always reflect Heaven, for all those who come – whether newcomers or people who have sat in the same pew for the past 75 years.

YOUTH – HEALTHY CONGREGATIONS – WORSHIP!

Now, let’s talk about some specifics of the Diocese:

Peterkin: This past year, we had some very good meetings of the Board, with some strong energy around ways to strengthen and build Peterkin. We had Peter Bergstrom from the Episcopal Camps and Conference Centers Organization come here to help us focus. In short, he said that as the Episcopal Church has been losing members, the Camps have a direct correlation of loss as well. Those camps that have closed recently have been the camps that refused to move into the 21st Century, and only want to continue to do camps as they have been doing them for the past 50 years.

With the addition of Stephen Day to the Diocesan Staff, to focus on Youth and Young Adults, we will now have more attention given to the strengthening and building of new ideas at Peterkin. In addition, I am asking a new priest in the Diocese, The Reverend Dr. John Kevern, to help create programs and conferences at both Peterkin and Sandscree. Along with Bonnie Thurston and others, we will begin to become a regional magnet for conferences on spirituality, ministry and other topics of great interest. These should begin in the not too distant future. (Right John???) But we need your assistance – I ask you and your vestries to use Peterkin as a place for Vestry Retreats and conferences. Take your youth there and use the place.

Unfortunately, we also experienced another setback at Peterkin. This past year, we were told that the pool failed to meet federal code – something to do with the rate of water filtration and turnover. We had no pool for this past summer. People survived, but if we are to have a class operation, I believe we need a pool. I have already begun to talk with people, who are willing to make a pledge toward a new pool, but I need you also! This is nothing that about \$250,000 won’t fix...yet another challenge for us all.

Gravatt and the Dining Hall have been painted, thanks to a challenge grant by Mr. David Pitts. They are beautiful!

So – we take a step forward, and we take a step backward. Such is the life of aging properties. But – let me emphasize that the properties are here (buildings and grounds) to serve the greater mission of Peterkin. We do not, and will not, build or fix or replace something just so we can be frozen in time. All that we have, in a temporal sense, is for the building up of the Kingdom of God.

Sandscrest: An opportunity to do a little teaching about Sandscrest. Several years ago, during a Diocesan Council meeting at Sandscrest, I made the comment that the Diocese does not own Sandscrest, rather we ‘control’ Sandscrest. Someone in the room got extremely upset and asked when we ‘gave it away’ and ‘why?’

Sandscrest was given to us (to make a long story shorter) by Harry and Helen Sands, for the use of the Diocese. Their hope was that the property would be used for ‘religious, educational or scientific’ purposes or as a Home for the Aged.

From there, we created a ‘Foundation’ to take title to the property and created a Board to run the place. For the past 60 years, we have run it very well, as a conference and retreat center. We have had good leadership there, and of course – meals and dining have always been critical aspects of Sandscrest.

We have a fine Director, in Sarah Lydick.

This past year, after several years of work and slowly moving forward, the Foundation approved new By-laws, combining the Foundation and the Board, so that there exists only one Body that will own and operate Sandscrest. Fortunately we also have many people on the outside, who stand ready to assist, and guide us as we move forward. This year, we will elect that new Body.

One of the early ‘hopes’ that Harry Sands had was that Sandscrest might be used as a retirement center. This past year I asked an ad hoc committee to explore this possibility. They met with consultants and had Sandscrest ‘rated’ for the possibility of building a center. Unfortunately, no matter how we tweaked the numbers, it was not a possibility. The cost was out of sight.

ECCC also spent time with the Board at Sandcrest, and helped to energize people to do more in fundraising, visioning and programming . I believe that due to many different streams coming together at the same time, Sandcrest has some wonderful years ahead of her, and we will all benefit. Father Kevern will also be working on bringing people to Sandcrest for Conferences...and like at Peterkin, I ask you to utilize Sandcrest! Bring your Vestries. Bring your youth! Hold events there!

The Highland Educational Project: Lori Osborne continues to do an excellent job there! We continue, after 60 years, to be the premier ministry in the county, providing assistance to people throughout the region – food, shelter, educational assistance, counseling, and many other ways in which the God of our Salvation becomes incarnate to the people in McDowell County.

The bad news is that so much is still needed. The Good News is that, quietly, unassumingly, sometimes only by emergency, but always lovingly, Lori and HEP are present.

The Anglican Communion: As many of you know, there is this thing running around the Anglican Communion called the “Anglican Covenant.” It was a product (at least its concept) from the Windsor Group convened by the Archbishop of Canterbury, several years ago. At Lambeth Conference it was discussed, and while I have to admit that we were told that no decisions were going to be made at Lambeth, it does appear that a decision was made that a Covenant would be presented to be adopted by all of the Provinces of the Anglican Communion.

We have people from the Episcopal Church who have been working on this group (among others) to help write a Covenant. Quite honestly, they seem to be rather supportive of such a document. As I stated last year and previously, I support the concept of a Covenant. It is what it is – a Covenant, not a legal Contract. It is a way of living together, and in the larger scheme of God’s Salvific Creation, the Anglican Communion is still relatively young and is suffering from growing pains. Something that helps us is probably not a bad thing. Those who worked on it have suggested that it is broad enough, with enough “mays,” “ifs,” “possibilities” and the like, that there is much latitude for the Episcopal Church, and other Provinces to continue to move forward where the Holy Spirit appears to be leading, but at the same time, an opportunity to remind everyone that we are in relationship.

Every Delegate to this Convention has been given a copy of the Anglican Covenant and I, along with the Presiding Bishop and others, expect that every congregation in the Diocese of West Virginia will explore this document...study it, discuss it, and report back to me on what you think. Read, mark, learn and inwardly digest it. To begin with, I would ask you to begin by asking two questions about the Covenant:

1. Why would this be a good thing for the Communion?
2. Why would this be a bad thing for the Communion?

And then move forward from there.

As you can imagine, there are people all over the board on this issue...some feel it's not necessary, some feel it's past time, some feel it's imperative...some feel it's 'Un-Anglican.' But I dare say, like many things – many people with opinions have not read the actual document.

I am reminded of a story from one of my favorite books – “The Way of the Wolf,” by Martin Bell. The story is entitled, “The Rag Tag Army.”

I think God must be very old and very tired. Maybe he used to look splendid and fine in his general's uniform, but no more. He's been on the march a long time, you know. And look at his rag-tag little army! All he has for soldiers are you and me. Dumb little army. Listen! The drum beat isn't even regular. Everyone is out of step. And there! You See? God keeps stopping along the way to pick up one of his tinier soldiers who decided to wander off and play with a frog, or run in a field, or whose foot got tangled in the underbrush. He'll never get anywhere that way. And yet, the march goes on.

Do you see how the marchers have broken up into little groups? Look at that group up near the front. Now, there's a snappy outfit. They all look pretty much alike – at least they're in step with each other. That's something! Only they're not wearing their shoes. They're carrying them in their hands. Silly little band. They won't get far before God will have to stop again.

Or how about that other group over there? They're all holding hands as they march. The only trouble with this is the men on each end of the line. Pretty soon they realize that one of their hands isn't holding onto anything – one hand is reaching, empty, alone. And so they hold hands with each other, and everybody marches around in circles. The more people holding hands, the bigger the circle. And, of course, a bigger circle

is deceptive because as we march along it looks like we're going somewhere, but we're not. And so God must stop again. You see what I mean? He'll never get anywhere that way!

If God were more sensible he'd take his little army and shape them up. Why, who ever heard of a soldier stopping to romp in a field? It's ridiculous. But even more absurd is a general who will stop the march of eternity to go and bring him back. But that's God for you. His is no endless, empty marching. He is going somewhere. His steps are deliberate and purposive. He may be old, and he may be tired. But he knows where he's going. And he means to take every last one of his tiny soldiers with him. Only there aren't going to be any forced marches. And, after all, there are frogs and flowers, and thorns and underbrush along the way. And even though our foreheads have been signed with the sign of the cross, we are only human. And most of us are afraid and lonely and would like to hold hands or cry or run away. And we don't know where we are going, and we can't seem to trust God – especially when it's dark out and we can't see him! And he won't go on without us. And that's why it's taking so long.

Listen! The Drum beat isn't even regular. Everyone is out of step. And there! You see? God keeps stopping along the way to pick up one of his tinier soldiers who decided to wander off and play with a frog, or run in a field, or who's foot got caught in the underbrush. He'll never get anywhere that way!

And yet, the march goes on!...

For some, the march is too slow...for others (most of us) we are the soldiers who wander off the path...Look around we – you and me, and the people in this room, and others just like us around the world, are the only people God has sent out to do the work and ministry of the Church! What a rag-tag crew we are! God depends upon us! Ugh!

God depends on us to do the ministry we have been called to perform.

Celebrant Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers?

People I will, with God's help.

Celebrant Will you persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?

People I will, with God's help.

¿Proclamarás por medio de la palabra y el ejemplo las Buenas Nuevas de Dios en Cristo?

Pueblo Así lo haré, con el auxilio de Dios.

Celebrante ¿Buscarás y servirás a Cristo en todas las personas, amando a tu prójimo como a ti mismo?

Pueblo Así lo haré, con el auxilio de Dios.

Celebrante ¿Lucharás por la justicia y la paz entre todos los pueblos, y respetarás la dignidad de todo ser humano?

Pueblo Así lo haré, con el auxilio de Dios.

WE WILL, WITH GOD'S HELP

Ministry – that which we are called to do. This past year, a Task Force, headed by the Very Reverend Kevin Kelly produced a statement of ministry for the Diocese of West Virginia. This was in response to the moratoria I put in place around the ordination process.

In 2003, our General Convention passed new Title III Canons, which radically changed the way people are ordained in this Church, and the way in which people may serve. While it was a radical alteration of the past, it was not recognized as radically different until several years later. And, we continued to do the same old thing, the same old way – which caused some confusion on all sides – COM, Bishop and those presenting themselves for ordination.

We have been in a moratoria for about 18 months, and during that time, we/I have been able to think things through, and the COM has been working on revisiting various questions about ordination. It was difficult to take time to reflect, because during much of the past 18 months, people were still 'entering the pipeline,' even though we were in a moratorium. They had begun at some point prior to the moratorium, and we continued to perpetuate the old system.

We expect a well formed and trained ordained leadership in our Church, but at the same time, the reality is that not everyone coming out of seminary can be guaranteed a full time paid position. Many of our congregations can no longer afford to pay clergy – even ¼ or ½ time for their ordained leadership...

So, how do we provide the best, but yet alter to a Church of the 21st Century?

The COM will have answers to specific questions, and the Moratorium is ended, effective 1 January 2011. I thank Tom Gilpin, the Rev. Julie Harris, the Very Reverend Kevin Kelly, Archdeacon Perrizo and the COM for their work in this process.

Our ministry statement states:

Ministry is our active response to the love of God.

Following Jesus' example, we:

Worship God

Proclaim the Good News,

Love and forgive,

Live and serve, sharing in Christ's reconciling work in the world.

God calls everyone to ministry.

God calls everyone to ministry. Like the story of Moses, who complained to God, that the work was too much, many of our clergy are expected, by their parishioners, to do the entire thing alone. I am amazed at how many congregations do not have Lay Eucharistic Visitors. These are people who are authorized (by the Bishop, with nomination from the priest and the Vestry) to take the Sacrament to people who are unable to attend Eucharist on Sunday. There are special provisions...but this is permitted. The priest cannot do it all, and the Commission on Ministry and I are working to see how we can strengthen lay ministry in the Diocese of West Virginia.

When Moses complained, God took some of the Spirit that was on Moses, and put it on the 70 elders...including Eldad and Medad...although Canon Vinson will tell you that according to a Pseudopigraphic story, there were actually 72 Elders – including Eldad, Medad, Doodad, and Crawdad...but that's another story, altogether.

God shared the gifts of ministry with those prepared to work in the field. God has not changed that – we need to continue to build up the ministries in the Diocese of West Virginia, so that everyone knows that the Holy Spirit is alive and well here in our midst.

To that end, Canon Vinson and the Board of ETS (Equipping the Saints) has spent much of the past year working on revamping our formation/training program. This Diocese has a long history of local education and formation, but we need to keep moving ahead. We need to meet the realities of the 21st Century, by online opportunities, while not neglecting the necessities of community building. We cannot have a well educated community of ministers who are isolated through the internet.

I believe we have a society that is more connected, through the internet, yet more isolated from incarnated community, by sitting at computer terminals. Our faith is an incarnational faith that recognizes Christ in each person – face to face. ETS is working hard on this, to make sure that both aspects are available.

Along with ministry of the ordained, in the Episcopal Church, comes responsibility. At the General Convention of 2009, we passed new Canons, relating to Title IV – what we know as the Disciplinary Canons. I take the Discipline of the Church extremely seriously, as we have noted in the past years. These Canons are a radical change from what we have had in the past, and they will take effect on 1 July 2011. In order to have them in full force on that date, each Diocese is required to update their own Canons. This will be presented in a few minutes, by our Diocesan Chancellor.

And – (almost finally), I want to speak briefly about our Companion Relationship with Colombia. Marsha and I spent 10 days with Bishop Duque, his wife Blanca Lucía and his Diocese, this past July. The Diocese of Colombia is a vibrant, growing place, with a gifted Bishop. I am happy that we have moved into this relationship, because I believe there are unlimited possibilities for us together.

I am the 970th Bishop in the Episcopal Church. Bishop Duque is the 969th. So we do have something in common right from the start. Since his arrival as Bishop, the number of Episcopal Congregations in Bogota has grown from 3 to 8 or 9. Many of these new congregations are what we would call ‘Unorganized Missions,’ or now ‘Bishop’s Missions,’ but he is growing new plants around the city. Their context is different from ours – obviously, but nonetheless, there is a great deal of similarity.

Education, poverty, unemployment are realities. The one thing that we were not prepared for though, was the Abuelos – the elderly who, when they become sick, are taken into the city by their families, and dropped off...abandoned – homeless and confused.

The Episcopal Church – particularly San Salvador – provides a place for them to live, eat and be in something of a community.

Bishop Duque has required (!) each congregation to adopt a new project – start a school, open a shelter, and the like – something GRAND!!! We can be a part of those projects, and I'm asking that the Companion Diocese Commission organize a mission trip to Colombia in 2011.

And finally –

Over the past year, I have been asked by several people to speak plainly about my vision for the Diocese of West Virginia. The Vision of the Diocese:

1. Outwardly: To be a place where Jesus Christ is known, worshiped, and proclaimed – clearly and loudly, by all people, Forgiveness is lived out in a radical way, and
2. Inwardly: To be a place where Children and Youth are incorporated and honored; we have Healthy Congregations (Stewardship/Evangelism) and where worship is alive and meaningfully focused and pointing to Jesus.

Now – that's who we are and who we will be!

But I would like to center on one other piece. Many of you have heard the story I have told for many years. A Christian Motivational speaker was talking about a change that took place in the United States in the mid-1960's. He said that a new company began something radical. Up until that time, grocery shopping was done between the hours of 8 am and 7 pm (or so). In the mid-1960's, along came a company called 7-11, which opened early and remained open until 11 pm. It was a radical concept, and even as a young child, I remember my parents laughing at it. "Who would declare they needed a quart of milk at 10:30 at night, and go out to buy it, and pay a premium for it?" Obviously we all knew how to go grocery shopping at the 'appropriate hours.'

BUT – today, in the 21st Century, if Kroger is not open 24/7, there's a problem!

Meanwhile, the Christian Church continues to offer 8 o'clock and 10:30, like we did in the 1950's.

It is time to change that!

Someone just told me that a recent study shows that 20% of Americans are either at work, or otherwise occupied on Sunday morning...add to that, those who are busy with sports and other 'family activities' and we have probably at least 40% of the population is not available on Sunday morning, for 'Church.'

Would the clergy of the Diocese please stand...

Brothers and Sisters. I have never given you a Charge at Diocesan Convention before, but today is my start.

I charge you to begin something new...a new liturgy, at a time NOT on Sunday morning.

I don't care if it's a Eucharist.

I don't care if it's got music.

I don't care if it's a Taizé service.

I don't care if it's Evening Prayer.

I don't care if it's on Saturday evening (the Roman Catholics have that all over us!)

I don't care if it's on Sunday evening.

I don't care if it's high church.

I don't care if it's low church.

I don't care if the laity lead it (except for Eucharist – no lay presidency)

I don't care about the style content or time.

JUST DO SOMETHING!!!! NOT ON SUNDAY MORNING!!!!

Adapt to the 21st Century.

Now, would the laity please stand.

My charge to you:

Support this!

You do not need to come to every service, but you do need to announce this to others. It would do no good to hold a new service on Sunday evening, at 5 pm, if no one ever hears about it. You'll come back to me next year and say, 'we tried it, but it didn't work.'

Support this!

Get involved.

Lift some of the Spirit that is on your ordained clergy, and take it upon yourself.

Know your story, and share your story!

Tell your story!

Share who you are, as a child of God.

And now to the Diocese: Please stand:

Make the liturgies of your congregations a vision of what heaven is.

Make the worship in your congregations so enlivened and bright that Christ is known, worshiped and adored.

Go forth, my brothers and sisters in Christ, and make Christ known in all the world.

Amen.