

225th Annual Diocesan Convention Church of the Cross, Bluffton, SC March 12, 2016

Bishop Lawrence's Address to the 225th Convention of the Diocese of South Carolina

“Therefore, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision” (Acts 26:19)

A fascinating study for a student of the Bible is to compare the different narratives of St. Paul’s conversion. It is told four times in the New Testament—thrice in The Book of Acts and once in the apostle’s Letter to the Galatians. In the verse I’ve cited above St. Paul describes his experience to King Agrippa. He also recalls the words the Risen Lord used to commission him—including the call to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles. Earlier in the Acts of the Apostles Paul tells a hostile Jewish crowd that as he was praying in the Temple in Jerusalem that he fell into a trance and saw Jesus saying to him: “Go, for I will send you far away to the Gentiles.” Even earlier in Acts 9 Ananias is instructed by the Lord to go pray for Paul who is in prayer, fasting on a street called Straight. When Ananias hesitates because of Paul’s reputation of persecuting Christians, God tells him: “Go, for he [Paul] is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.”

There is no need to see a conflict in these accounts. Anyone who has tried to tell the intricacies of his or her conversion or witness to God’s miraculous intervention, will recognize just how much one must leave out or at least merge for the sake of the audience. Whichever dimension of the heavenly vision the apostle was referring to when he spoke before King Agrippa it is clear that the call to be an apostle to the Gentiles was for St. Paul his great mission; this was the heavenly vision to which he was not disobedient—indeed, it was that for which Christ took hold of him. We stand as a diocese on the shoulders of those who have led and gone before us in the past—and I appreciate Bishops Allison and Salmon who have served before me. So as I’ve tried to be faithful to the call given me as your bishop some eight years ago, this statement of the Apostle, “Therefore, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision” has often come often to mind.

Perhaps some of you will recall the following charge which I gave at my first convention as your bishop:

‘We cannot sit on the sidelines and wait for things to unfold, leaving others to shape the future in which we shall live. We must be among those who shape the future. Thus I am increasingly convinced that God has called us,

- To help shape the future of Anglicanism in the 21st Century through mutually enriching missional relationships with dioceses and provinces of the Anglican Communion, and through modeling a responsible autonomy and inter-provincial accountability for the sake of Jesus Christ, his Kingdom and his Church.

[But]... I believe we can state the above sentence, more succinctly—we are “To Make Biblical Anglicans for a Global Age.”

That was the T-shirt version, and it has stuck! I am more convinced now than ever, however inadequately we have received, embodied and conveyed it, that this was a vision from the Lord. I have also come to accept that what takes a year or two for a new rector to establish in a parish takes five years for a bishop to achieve in a diocese. It is only in recent years have I noticed rectors reciting this statement in a way that rolls naturally off of their tongues.

Now in this ninth year as your bishop I remain unswervingly committed to our calling. I see also the need to doggedly keep it before us. Frankly, this vision is like a railroad track—that is, it has two rails. One rail is a local focus and the other is more global.

So let me elaborate afresh: To Make Biblical Anglicans will mean two things:

- To help every congregation to engage every generation with the Good News of Jesus Christ
- To help shape emerging Anglicanism in the 21st Century

**Every Congregation Engaging Every Generation**

Let me begin with the first rail of Making Biblical Anglicans for a Global Age—and what is clearly the more local dimension of this global calling: to help every congregation to engage every generation with the Good News of Jesus Christ. In that famous phrase of Jacques Ellul—“Think globally—act locally.” Let me highlight just a few ways we are doing this.

**Pre-Convention Workshops**—For years Fr. Craig Borrett challenged me at Deans’ Meetings that we needed to reshape our Diocesan Conventions. Frankly, I never took this criticism personally, for the diocesan staff and I were just following the well trod precedent from the past: An Opening Eucharist; some sort of gathering on Friday evening; followed by the Business of the Convention on Saturday. Dean Borrett’s mantra however was “Why don’t we focus on ministry more than on canonical matters?” Well it was a good question and a worthy challenge. Finally, at the Diocesan Convention in Florence in 2013 the diocesan staff and I decided to respond to his entreaties. Admittedly our venture was hardly a heavy wager of resources. But it was something. And it was a modest success. Then in 2014 and again in 2015 we added even more workshops. This year while perhaps still not everything the dean of West Charleston would like, it is clearly the most expansive Pre-Convention event we’ve launched. We had a major presentation on Friday morning on “Christian Grandparenting” and a full menu of ministry workshops in the afternoon. Many of the offerings were given by clergy and lay leaders from within our own diocese. Perhaps it time to drop off calling it Pre-Convention and make it officially part of the Convention. Thank you, Craig! Some of the best ideas come from those out in the field telling us what they need.

Since we will be hearing from Dave Wright, our Diocesan Coordinator of Youth Ministry, and Peter Rothermel, Coordinator of Faith Formation, later today about many ministries in the diocese, I will only highlight a few new developments.

**Coordinator of Men’s Ministry**—Jay Crouse, a layman from Florida, and his wife Laura, have recently moved to Charleston. Jay now has an office in an empty room on the second floor of the Diocesan House. While receiving no stipend from the diocese he nevertheless freely offers his experience and expertise in developing men’s ministry in the church. His book, *Men and the Church* is an excellent resource for priests and lay men who want to see a growing ministry to men in their congregations. I commend him and his ministry to you. Call him, he’ll be glad to help!

**Diocesan Women’s Ministry**—with the break from TEC in November of 2012 there was an obvious need to redesign women’s ministry on a diocesan level. ECW was clearly an entity of the past. But what should replace it? While several of our congregations had vital and active women’s ministry they were unrelated to the ECW—particularly in larger places like Holy Cross, S. I., Trinity, Myrtle Beach and St. Paul’s, Summerville. So what should the future look like? While the Diocesan Women’s Ministry are still in a restructuring process, having just experienced a real loss with the death of their chaplain, the Reverend Martha Horn, they nevertheless, press in hope; charting a way forward in this new season, seeking to take the best from the past while striving to adapt to the very different world of today,

**Church Planting**—Do you know that 7 out of 10 adults in America consider themselves deeply spiritual? 4 out of 5 say their religious faith is very important to them? Yet that doesn’t mean they attend church; or know how their faith fits into their lives, their work, their family relationships, their daily routines or the problems of their finances, health, lifestyle, or future—let alone how to nurture their life with God, or grow as a follower of Jesus Christ—living abundant, meaningful and enjoyable lives! ( see George Barna, *Fish Out of Water*) Still one of the most effective ways of engaging new generations of people with the Good News of Jesus Christ is through church plants. And I believe a new day of church planting has got to begin in the Diocese of South Carolina.

How though should we carry out this ministry? Should church plants be the work of the diocesan staff and a committee of Diocesan Council? Or should this be done by existing parishes working in step with the diocesan leadership? I tend to favor the second of these methods. But what if our existing congregations do not see the need for, or believe they have the resources to plant a new congregation? I was prayerfully grappling with this question last week and planning to raise the question at this convention when I received an email from the Reverend Gary Beson—one of our new church planters. As you know, St. Timothy’s Church in Cane Bay was just received as a new mission of this convention. It is a

joint venture between St. Paul's Summerville and the diocese: St. Paul's has supplied a bevy of members with which to launch the church and the diocese some modest funds.

Well, as I was praying through what I would say about church planting Gary's email came: I share it here as a challenge:

Good Morning Bishop Mark and Fr. Chuck,

I met with Mr. Barry Jurs, Berkeley County Economic Development Director, this morning at his office and got a clearer picture of what this county is growing towards in terms of industrial and commercial development which ultimately means new people moving here to fill the jobs. It was an exciting meeting and I wished both of you could have been there to hear all of his projections.

I am writing to express a desire to be part of some Diocesan strategy of church growth that seeks to do what we did in business which was open our locations where the populations were, that we sought to serve. The good news about church planting is that everyone is our population. So we just need to go where the people are and after my meeting with Mr. Jurs I am more convinced than ever that "the people" are coming here. The transportation system and infrastructure alone is poised to support industry and commercial development the likes of which have never been seen before in this area. ....

Why reference Fr. Chuck Owens? Chuck is Chairman of the Congregational Development Committee. It is a committee of Diocesan Council. As the Rector of The Cross, Bluffton, he is an ideal person to chair this committee. Each year I attend The Cross' Annual Parish Meeting. And each year, without fail, Fr. Chuck gives an inspiring vision and charge for the new year. This past January he reported that between their two campuses the ASA was 1220. They added this past year 274 new members to the parish—83 men, 110 women and 81 children! He also spoke of several bold new initiatives planned for the next few years. His vision and passion grips his people and they lean into it with their hearts, minds and money.

All rectors, he observed, fit into one of three categories:

- Undertakers
- Caretakers
- Risk takers

Fr. Chuck is a risk taker and both the Church of the Cross and the Diocese of South Carolina have benefited from it. The very place we are meeting in today was once a dream; but a dream shared and a dream embraced; which became a dream realized. Fr. Chuck, Gary, and I, and perhaps a few others, will meet this spring to plan strategically for the growth burgeoning around Charleston and the coast.

One final venture to help— every congregation to engage every generation with the Gospel of Jesus Christ:

Diocesan Canon Missioner—for some time I have thought we needed a Canon Missioner for the diocese. The work load for Canon Lewis and for the rest of the diocesan staff, including myself, means that many opportunities for growing or re-missioning our existing congregations goes unseized. Recently I met with the rector and vestry of All Saints' Florence. This is a congregation that John Burwell and Holy Cross, Sullivan's Island breathed new life into some years ago. Now under the leadership of Fr. Karl Burns it continues to grow. But the growth barriers for a congregation transitioning from a "Collie" size church to a "Garden" size are many. (What's a collie sized church? It has an ASA of 50-100 and often stabilizes 70. A Garden has 100-175 ASA and it stabilizes at 120 often with 35-40 members at the 8:00 service which is like a "Cat" and 70-80 at the 10:00 which is a collie—together they make a Garden) All Saints' is right at 100 ASA and just identified its Cat and its Collie! As they step into this next size congregation the role of the rector changes and the role of the lay leadership changes.

It is one thing for the bishop to spend an afternoon with a vestry and priest to address these issues but think how much better to have an experienced Canon Missioner coming along side such congregations on a monthly basis. I'm exploring

alternative funding to bring such a person on the diocesan staff, confident that if we can bring the right person on with non-budgeted money for a year or two the position will soon pay for itself from the growth of our congregations. But the right person is the key!

Before I leave this thrust of “Every Congregation Engaging Every Generation” I can hear the voices of those at St. Swithin’s near the Swamp—with all of their 25 members—saying, “Bishop, do you think it’s realistic for us to reach every generation?” No, probably not—at least right now. But you can reach one; and you need to—that is if you want St. Swithin’s to be around for the next generation.

### **Shaping Emerging Anglicanism in the 21st Century**

Now to the second rail in the track—helping to shape emerging Anglicanism in the 21st Century: I begin with a brief look back at these past few years.

**The Anglican Communion Development Committee**—has been a key vehicle through which we have formed missional relationships with dioceses and provinces within the Anglican Communion. This committee under the leadership of the Reverend Bob Lawrence and Dr. Kendall Harmon has helped in linking us to the larger Anglican world, whether with the Global South Primates Steering Committee, GAFCON and its Primates, the Anglican Relief and Development, or the many Provinces, bishops and dioceses around the world. It has also played a strategic role in helping many of our parishes establish missional relationships with dioceses around the Anglican Communion.

Parishes in Missional Relationships within the Anglican Communion—while some of our congregations (OSA) continue in meaningful relationship with the Dominican Republic, increasingly many have responded to my call to engage in active ministry with those provinces and dioceses that have stood with us in our time of need. Our Savior, Johns Island has engaged in several missions with the Diocese of Egypt, North Africa and the Horn of Africa; St. John’s, Johns Island has entered a partnership with Northern Uganda; Christ Church, Mt. Pleasant and St. Paul’s, Summerville with Marsabit in Kenya; The Cross with the Diocese of Kilmore, Elfin and Ardagh as well as the Diocese of Derry in Ireland; St. Luke’s, with Dar es Salaam in Tanzania; and others I haven’t time to mention.... Thank you! And if your congregation hasn’t yet found a diocese with which to network in missional relationship the New Wineskin’s Conference, is this April 7-10th. Subsequent to that bishops and leaders from around the Anglican Communion will be visiting in our diocese. It’s a wonderful opportunity to make a connection!

**Mere Anglicanism**—has for many years been an important ministry within the diocese. It was first initiated by Bishop Allison and Dean McKeachie. In recent years, under the aegis of the Reverend Jeffrey Miller and St. Helena’s, Beaufort it has become one of the foremost conferences for the emerging Anglicanism of this century; engaging the great issues of the day—Science and Faith, Secularism and Christianity, and, this last year, The Cross & the Crescent: A Christian perspective on Islam. Attracting in recent years 800 to 900 people from across the United States and the UK, it has become a much anticipated annual event for many Anglicans and attendees from many other denominations as well. Archbishop Mouneer Anis told me at this year’s conference how amazed he is with how much the Diocese of South Carolina is doing to help shape Anglicanism around the world.

We’ve not been disobedient to the heavenly vision.

One way to help shape Anglicanism in the 21st Century is to shape the leaders of the future. Success so often rises or falls on leadership. Let me share with you two leadership initiatives we just launched and two others scheduled to begin this year.

**Next Level Leadership Initiative**—was launched just this last year. I’ve spoken at previous Diocesan Conventions that I hoped to begin Post Ordination Training (PORT) for those newly ordained clergy fresh out of seminary. Finally, during a meeting last year with Fr. Shay Gaillard my vision for the project found the right leader of the project. However, Fr. Shay suggested that it needed another name than PORT. So the Next Level Leadership Initiative was born. He and I have worked together to host Phases I and II last year and we have Phase III already scheduled at St. Christopher later this

spring. Seasoned clergy of the diocese have been teachers and consultants for these gatherings. Shay's personal leadership in this has been essential to the program's success!

**Anglican Leadership Institute**—speaking of vision needing to find the right leadership, the ALI is a perfect illustration of this axiom. In my Bishop's Address two years ago I dared to mention a new dream for how the diocese could more richly fulfill our vision to Make Biblical Anglicans for a Global Age and help shape Anglicanism in the 21st Century.

"It is for now" I said,

- an embryonic dream and I have debated with myself if I should even share it with you.... But...let me give you a glimpse of something I've had only a glimpse of. What if we established in this diocese an institute to bring emerging Anglican leaders from across the world for 4 -6 weeks of residential study, prayer, renewal and reflection with seasoned Christian leaders and scholars? Imagine what a season—building relationships of gospel affection and a missionary vision for reaching the secular and the religious cultures of the 21st Century—might mean for those who labor in demanding vineyards.... Imagine what it could mean for emerging Anglican leaders to come here from various parts of the communion for a season of study, renewal and refreshment and to have our clergy study and pray alongside them under scholars such as Michael Nazir-Ali and many others .... Imagine what remarkable vision and perspective these young leaders and our own priests might be given.... This would be designed for ... those in mid-stride who have been ministering for some 10, 15 or perhaps even 20 years who would be strengthened by such a time for prayer, study and visioning with other leaders to deepen their confidence in the Gospel.

Well, under the leadership of the Reverend Dr. Peter Moore and an outstanding Board of Directors and a bevy of volunteers (many of whom are members of St. Michael's, Charleston), and through the gifts of a generous benefactor the dream shared in 2014 became a reality this past January. Let me share a brief video made during this first session: [Show ALI video] Many priests and lay persons in the diocese participated in the daily sessions or attended an open evening lecture from one of the visiting scholars—and also let me say "Thank you" to our churches for welcoming the ALI fellows at Sunday worship. Priests and volunteers from around the diocese—thank you for making this dream a reality! You touched tomorrow today through your time, your gifts, your love and your passion.

We've not been disobedient to the heavenly vision.

Now for two new leadership initiatives which I pray will be birthed during this next year.

**Clergy Continuing Education Committee**—I've talked over the years about the need to financially assist our clergy to take time for continuing education. I benefited from a diocesan fund and a Clergy Continuing Ed Committee when I served as a priest in the Diocese of Pittsburgh. But I noticed when coming to South Carolina that there was no such fund or committee. I've mentioned it in addresses, as well at clergy conferences, but it remained just something to be done when all else was finished. And a bishop's work is like housework—it's never finished. Just recently Bishop Allison came to my aid. He has long advocated for continuing education for the clergy. He and several priests of the diocese, including the Reverend Dr. Donnie McDaniel, have decided to wait no longer. The full shape this new committee and its charge is still developing. But God willing the first steps will be taken this year!

**Mid-Vocation Rectors**—the renowned historian and biographer David G. McCullough recently presented a lecture at the Citadel. He shared several profound lessons he has learned through his study of great leaders which I hastily wrote down on a scrap of paper I found in my suit pocket. "One of the first lessons of history" he said, "is that you can't accomplish anything great alone." Several of our senior rectors have retired or are preparing to do so: Who will be the leaders for the next chapter of our diocesan life? And for that matter who will be the leaders in the emerging Anglicanism in North America? Far too often senior leaders are so busy doing tasks that they do not sufficiently invest in growing the younger leaders who will succeed them. Frankly, I have a growing passion to spend more of my time with those rectors who are in mid-career. What form this will take I do not yet know. But I mention it here so that both you and I can hold me responsible for doing it. A couple of years ago I was at Downtown Disney with my family. The park was doing construction and had plywood blocking the work area. But they did not waste the space. They had sayings of Walt Disney placarded on these barricades. I took photos of the sayings. One fits well for my new commitment to Mid-

**Vocation Rectors:** “The way to get started is to quit talking and begin doing.” Walt Disney. There was another Disney saying that describes what we’ve been doing in this diocese with our vision of “helping to shape emerging Anglicanism in the 21st Century”. “Get a good idea, and stay with it. Dog it and work at it until it’s done, and done right.” Walt Disney Well, let’s take a page out of the Magic Kingdom for the work of Christ’s Kingdom.

**Provincial Affiliation with ACNA**—one final thing for this rail of helping to shape tomorrow’s Anglicanism, though it also could fit well under the rail of every congregation engaging every generation. Later in this convention you will hear a report from the Task Force on Affiliation. Up until now our conversations in the diocese looking at the possibility of affiliating with the Anglican Church in North America have focused too much on the inherent difficulties—problems of overlapping jurisdictions, issues of ordination, the conflicting DNA of the various entities which merged to form the ACNA. We have spent insufficient time looking at the positives. I believe they are many. So we are —flipping the Script. The task force report will share many of the positives—from issues of Clergy Care as mentioned briefly by Bishop Thad Barnum last evening at the opening Eucharist; to experience in Church Planting; to reaching the younger millennial generation and the changing cultures around us. More importantly, such affiliation will unleash new opportunities for our younger clergy to shape and to be shaped by what God is doing in North America, and will help all of us to have a greater focus beyond ourselves working alongside our brothers and sisters in Christ. I’ll share more thoughts regarding these opportunities at the various deanery convocations that we’ll host around the diocese during this coming year. It is an exciting time in which to live!

As I’ve shared this vision for the future I can hear someone thinking to herself—“Bishop that’s a lot to take in given the fact that we’ve been running against the wind now for some time.” Well, yes, it is. But I noted earlier, I just heard David McCullough, the Pulitzer Prize Winning biographer of leaders give a lecture at the Citadel. He spoke about some of the lessons he learned from writing his recent book on the Wright Brothers. They cracked the code of flight by scientific study and by observing birds. They discovered that if you want to fly you need the wind not at your back but in your face. For as he succinctly summarized: “No bird ever soared in a calm.” And as I learned years ago, “An eagle doesn’t roost in a sparrow’s nest.” So, whether we’re facing a head wind or tail wind, let us learn from St. Paul, that eagle of spiritual flights, to hold fast to the God-given vision; for as he wrote to the church in Corinth: “I, on my part, therefore, am so running, as one not distracted from keeping an eye clearly on the goal.” (1 Corinthians 9:26)

Yesterday I got an email from Fr. Greg Snyder chair of the committee which has to write resolutions on the Bishop’s Convention Address.

*Dear Bishop,*

*I need to tell you that my Dad was an air traffic controller aboard the aircraft carrier USS Independence during the Viet Nam War. He said that when they were ready to engage the enemy the captain of the ship would say "let's put it into the wind." He meant, let's align the carrier so that all flight take-offs would be directly into the wind to create greater lift for the aircraft. You see, even though the aircraft are catapulted off the deck with a huge acceleration, they needed sufficient lift, quickly, to not plunge directly into the ocean. To this day, when my Dad is ready to take his leave he says, "Let's put it into the wind."*

So as for this Diocese of South Carolina—“Let’s put her into the wind!”