

The Address of the Rt. Rev. Scott Mayer
33rd Diocesan Convention
Episcopal Diocese of Fort Worth
November 13, 2015

I would like to begin this afternoon by expressing my gratitude to the host deanery of this 33rd Diocesan Convention, the Fort Worth South Deanery. Special thanks goes to the Dean, Father Eddie Barnett, and to the head of the Convention Planning Committee, Margaret Miculi, and to those who planned today's liturgy, especially Father Curt Norman, Paul Warren, and the Trinity Folk Group. And I would like to give thanks to the management and staff of the Fort Worth Botanic Gardens.

I would also like to recognize some people, beginning with Kathy Mayer. We've been married for 37 years; we have two adult children, both married, and two grandchildren. When we were in discernment about this call to serve the Diocese of Fort Worth, Kathy reminded me of one of my favorite all-time baseball players, Chicago Cubs Hall-of-Famer Ernie Banks. Also known as "Mr. Cub," Ernie Banks loved playing ball, and he knew how privileged he was to play the sport he loved. And every day when the team was poised on the dugout steps, ready to take the field, Ernie Banks said aloud, "Let's play two!" Like every little boy playing all day long on the sandlot, Ernie Banks said aloud, "Let's play two." One day last March, Kathy said, "Let's play two."

I would like to introduce my family who are here today – my mother, Mary Mayer, who taught my brothers and me two fundamental truths about God – that God is everywhere and God loves us – and my brother and his wife, Cliff and Shelly Mayer.

And while I'm taking this moment of personal privilege to express gratitude, I would like to recognize the two other bishops who are with us today, both for whom I feel a special connection, and both of whom I dare to say are the most compassionate pastors in the House of Bishops. Bishop Sam Hulse, who was baptized and confirmed at St Andrews Fort Worth, and served as bishop of Northwest Texas for 18 years, played an unofficial but significant role in the reorganization of this diocese and continues to do so.

Bishop Rayford High served this diocese as Provisional Bishop for the preceding three years. The "man in the white hat" helped organize us, putting badly needed systems in place. He helped take us a big step further out of "waiting mode" or "survival mode" into a focus on God's mission. And carrying the bishop's crozier in his gun case, he confirmed new Episcopalians all over the diocese.

One of Bishop High's great accomplishments was building an outstanding diocesan office staff. I recognized this quickly upon my arrival, and I was grateful to have the opportunity to "show off" the abilities and contributions of this staff at a recent gathering called "Clergy Conversations" (also initiated by Rayford). Before the meeting concluded, one of our priests who has served in a couple of other dioceses, observed aloud about this talented staff as everyone nodded in agreement. At this time, I would like to introduce: our Treasurer's Assistant, Adriana Cline; Administrative Assistant, Michele King; Ministry Support and Communications Officer, Deacon Tracie Middleton; Communication Director, Katie Sherrod; and Canon to the Ordinary, Canon Janet Waggoner.

Two members of our Northwest Texas office staff are present with us for this Convention. I would like to introduce two dear friends and colleagues: Deacon Nancy Igo, who directs our communications, as well as Human Resources, along with wearing a few other hats; and Canon Mike Ehmer, who serves as Canon to the Ordinary. This shared ministry between two dioceses works first, with God's help, and secondly, because both dioceses have outstanding staffs.

We have some other guests with us today from beyond the Diocese of Fort Worth. I would like to introduce them: Mary Brennan from the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society; and our workshop leaders, including Scott Gunn with Forward Movement; Tamara Plummer with Episcopal Relief and Development; Taylor Witkowski with Refugee Services of Texas; and Chris Yaw with "Church Next."

Several people have completed terms or resigned from various boards, committees, commissions, and positions. (Some are being reappointed.) I would like to recognize and thank the following people: from the Standing Committee, Norm Snyder and Father Curt Norman; from the Commission on Ministry, Susan Nanna, Joel Walker, Deacon Henry Penner, and Mother Judy Upham; from the Corporation, Father John Stanley; from Constitution and Canons, Elinor Normand, Robert Hicks, and Kathleen Wells; from the Executive Council, Dr. Jane Dennis, Brent Walker, Father Eddie Barnett, Father Tony Hiatt, Elizabeth McPherson-Darrow, and Susan Kleinwechter; Secretary of the Diocese, Father Bruce Coggin; Treasurer, Robert Hicks; Chancellor (now the Assistant Chancellor for litigation), Kathleen Wells.

I would like to introduce three people who have been appointed to some of these significant positions during the last year. Sandy Liser has been appointed to serve as

the new chancellor; David Lowder (who is recovering from surgery) is the new treasurer; and Father Andrew Wright is the new secretary.

I would like for all of us to take a moment to thank some people publicly. (Given that I have served you for only 4 months, I have had some help with this from a certain high-profile journalist and staunch Episcopalian: Katie Sherrod.)

George Komechak. “George was among the first laypeople of the diocese to understand that if lay people didn’t fight to remain in The Episcopal Church, the Episcopal Church as we knew and loved it in North Central Texas was going to disappear. Being George, he didn’t get mad (although he could), he got organized. He joined with other Episcopalians and took the job of leader of Fort Worth Via Media. His calm demeanor, his absolute professionalism, his attention to detail, his decades of corporate leadership experience, and his deep faith combined to make him the perfect leader for that time. Utterly and completely unflappable, he was impossible to insult, and refused to deviate from his message: first, we were Episcopalians and we meant to remain Episcopalians, and second, all are welcome in this place.

“After the reorganization, he took the leadership of the Constitution and Canons Committee. He dealt with illness, pain, and increasing debilitation with a grace and dignity that hid the depth of his suffering. And when he left us, much too soon, he left a legacy of calm leadership that many will try to emulate. We give thanks for his life, even as we reap the benefits of his leadership.” [K Sherrod]

Maggie Withroder. “Maggie was a force of nature. If you needed something done and done well, you called Maggie. This was the case at Christ the King and then at Trinity. She was like those celebrities who need only one name. Everyone knew Maggie.

“Maggie was never unkind, but she did not suffer fools gladly. You always knew exactly where you were with Maggie. Maggie didn’t know what a hidden agenda was. Being an Episcopalian was part of Maggie’s identity and she was fiercely protective of it and of her church homes. No one badmouthed The Episcopal Church or Trinity Church in her hearing, and got away unscathed.

“Maggie had a lot of talents, but one of the best was her dry sense of humor. There were few situations so fraught that Maggie couldn’t find some humor in it. Her organizational and logistical skills were legendary. And if you needed to be cheered up, here would come Maggie with Freddy, her tiny dog.

“For many of us, Maggie was synonymous with Trinity – a familiar welcoming presence, a fellow celebrant in times of joy, and always a sure support in times of trouble. So be understanding if you see staff and parishioners at Trinity looking a bit lost - it’s because there is a Maggie-sized hole in their collective life.” [KS]

Bob Hicks. “Bob stepped up to offer his talents as treasurer for the diocese shortly after the diocese reorganized. The diocese was rebuilding from scratch. We had no data base, nor access to diocesan records. Bob Hicks brought a depth of experience and breadth of knowledge that made a whole lot of us breathe big sighs of relief.

“Unlike some treasurers of organizations, Bob believes in a theology of abundance. He never forgets that we are a church, not a corporation; an organization of human beings, not numbers or pegs to be put in certain slots. He knows to his bones that we do not exist to simply have nice looking and well managed balance sheets, although he certainly believes in them – and he made sure we had them. He knows we exist to

give ourselves away. In his report to convention in 2010, Bob said: “The budget reflects stepping beyond ourselves ... to devote ourselves to outreach Let’s deal with abundance, not scarcity.’ ‘But as your treasurer, I will be watching.” [K Sherrod]

Kathleen Wells. “Kathleen was one of the group of lay people who organized early to try to combat the undermining of The Episcopal Church by those making clear their intention to leave. With others, she traveled across the diocese to speak to any group who was willing to listen.

“Kathleen used her legal skills to assist the Steering Committee North Texas Episcopalians, as they worked with the Office of the Presiding Bishop in the months leading up to the split, and afterward, in preparing for the election of a provisional bishop and the reorganizing convention in February of 2009.

“Kathleen put her heart and soul into the work of reorganization and rebuilding. She worked tirelessly with the legal team dealing with the litigation, while famously telling everyone to ‘Keep Calm and Carry On.’” She worked with nearly every – if not every – diocesan committee, board, and commission. She advised our bishops, our clergy, and our lay leadership. Her intellect, passion, dedication, and determination has left its mark on this diocese.” [K Sherrod]

Father Bruce Coggin. “Bruce Coggin’s love for the Episcopal Diocese of Fort Worth began before the Diocese of Fort Worth existed. He loved it when it was still part of Dallas. He loved it when it was formed. He loved it when things were going south. Bruce stepped up before the split to help the lay leaders who were struggling to counter the misinformation being spread about the Episcopal Church. He prayed with us, strategized with us, loved us, and made us laugh.

“He has one of the keenest minds around. His intellect is huge, his sense of humor even bigger, and his institutional memory is irreplaceable. He has served as secretary to convention since we reorganized. He served as clerk for Executive Council. He served as priest to displaced congregations including St Simon’s, St Mary’s Hillsboro, St Mary’s Hamilton, and All Saints Wichita Falls. He loved them at their most wounded, even as he nudged them into healthier states of mind – teaching them that one of the best antidotes to anger (even righteous anger) is to help others. His sermons teach us, stretch us, make us laugh and cry, listen, and think. He challenges us to be our best selves.” [K Sherrod]

Father Bruce has answered the call to serve a congregation in Cuernavaca for three months. Duty calls, so he is not here today. Let’s show our gratitude to Bruce.

Father Curt Norman. “Curt’s time on the Standing Committee has not been boring, to say the least. His leadership has played a key role in moving this diocese to this point in time, when we are positioned to move forward significantly. He shares with our new presiding bishop the impulse to ‘GO!’ – to step forward with confidence because he is thoroughly grounded in scripture, reason, and tradition. Curt’s quiet determination and his really well-developed ability to create an air of inevitability about what he believes ought to happen plays no small part in the shared ministry between Northwest Texas and Fort Worth.” [K Sherrod]

Now – while we are thanking people – not only is Katie Sherrod a gifted and professional journalist, it’s obvious that she knows us, loves us, and sees the good in us. Thank you, Katie.

Curt Norman's "well developed air of inevitability" came into play when he contacted me at the end of last year about the possibility of discussing ways that our two dioceses could partner in mission – meaning initially, I discovered later, to partner by sharing a bishop. To make a long story short, Father Norman, Canon Waggoner, and Norm Snyder came to Lubbock for a meeting. Three hours later, we agreed to ask our respective Standing Committees to consider a joint meeting in Abilene.

On March 5th, we gathered in Abilene at the Church of the Heavenly Rest in what was called (tongue in cheek) the Abilene Summit. Bishop Claude Payne, former bishop of Texas and Abilene resident, served as the moderator. Bishop Sean Rowe, currently serving as the bishop to two dioceses in Pennsylvania, served as our consultant.

The gathering included most of two Standing Committees, Treasurers, Chancellors, and Canons to the Ordinary – all arriving with an interior posture of discernment, open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Speaking personally, I knew the logic of this arrangement. I believe we are natural partners. Fort Worth is where the West begins; we are bordering dioceses, sharing a common culture.

All of that made sense, but I needed to discern a sense of call. And after spending time with your representatives, and hearing your story, I became aware of the huge privilege of serving you. Not only did I sense a call, the Northwest Texas representatives did, as well. On May 16th you officially called me to serve as your Provisional Bishop, effective July 1st.

This year's meeting of the General Convention in Salt Lake City was significant for many reasons. Perhaps most significant was the decision to call Michael Bruce Curry to serve as the next Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church. Bishop Curry was

installed as our Presiding Bishop on All Saints Day at the Washington National Cathedral in an inspirational and memorable liturgy.

By now, I suspect most of you know that Bishop Curry has a magnetic, dynamic, and warm personality, and that he is nothing less than a legendary preacher. He is a gifted leader and communicator. He has the ability to take complex theological concepts and speak understandably to and connect with all people. And he is at heart an evangelist, preaching frequently on Matthew's version of the Great Commission to "Go, therefore, and make disciples." His love for Jesus is palpable, contagious, and inspirational.

Bishop Curry believes the chief work of the Church is making disciples. And he believes that the most important word in the Great Commission is the word "Go!"

To quote him, he says in his sermon at General Convention: "And the reason I lift up that word 'go' is because we are the Jesus Movement." Referring to Jesus, he says, "This brother didn't come into this world to leave it the way he found it. He came to change it."

He refers to the mission statement in the Diocese of Ohio, which says – "Love God; Love your neighbor; Change the world" – and says, "We are part of the Jesus Movement, and he summoned us to make disciples to transform this world by the power of the Good News."

In the first chapter of John's Gospel, two disciples ask Jesus, "Rabbi, where are you staying?" And Jesus answers, "Come and see." And the next day, a brand new disciple named Philip goes and finds Nathanael, and says to him, "We have found him

about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth.” And Nathanael replies – now famously – “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Philip responds: “Come and see.”

You and I have lived our lives on a place on the timeline of history in which the church-culture has operated out of “come and see”: “come to our church, and see.” We have lived in a time and place in which society itself understands “church” as a place to go on Sunday.

And I would like to take a moment to suggest what is good about that. Millions of lives have been changed by “going to church” – whether in an awe-inspiring urban cathedral while experiencing God in a solemn high mass, or at a country revival, singing “Just as I Am” at an altar call.

And those places are sacred. One doesn’t need to search far in the Hebrew Scriptures to find the occasion and impulse to build an altar to declare God’s presence and God’s action. And those of us who are Anglican and are influenced by Celtic spirituality know that there are “thin places” where God seems particularly present. And it was the great 20th century Anglican theologian, Jon MacQuarrie, who said, referencing the sacraments, “If God is everywhere, as we claim, then certainly God is particularly somewhere.” And it was Kenneth Leech, one of our tradition’s great spiritual directors, who claimed that worship is the most vital of all human activities, and the church building is a sign of Transcendence.

Sacred spaces and sacred buildings are sacramental to us – outward, visible signs of God’s presence and God’s action in the world. (Anyone who has been exiled knows

there is more to our being drawn to sacred spaces than sentimentality and fond memories.)

So, we have operated out of an interior posture of “come and see,” and I would suggest that’s how the North American culture understands our mission: “come and see.” It’s the water in which we swim. And frankly, that’s the church I personally was trained to serve. So, I understand.

We know that there is a fundamental shift taking place in the Church throughout Western Civilization. Some say we have moved into the Post-Constantinian Age, some say “post-Christendom,” some call it the Great Emergence. Harvey Cox says we’re moving from the Age of Belief (meaning belief systems) to the Age of the Spirit; Huston Smith calls this “the second revolution of the human spirit.” A fundamental shift is taking place – whether we call it a new reformation, or a metamorphoses (meaning “change in form”), or an emerging church – and interestingly enough, none of these theologians, historians, and sociologists are saying this shift – this “shaking of the foundations” – is bad.

I’m not sure we can boil it down to one particular change, but I wonder if the fundamental shift is a move from an understanding of the Church as a place to go to understanding the Church as a body called to participate in God’s mission; a shift to understanding Church itself as part of a movement; a shift from “come and see” to “Go!”

Now, we are Episcopalians, and as such we are not inclined to say “either/or.” We more often say “both/and” than “either/or.” That’s one of the beauties of our tradition. I’m not going to discourage anyone from saying, “come and see.” Trinity

Episcopal Church hosted a very well attended seminar for the diocese last Saturday, entitled “Invite, Welcome, Connect.” That’s great! But Bishop Curry is correct, I believe, that our context today calls for an interior posture of “Go” – and not simply sending someone else to “go” to China or Africa, but for the baptized to go into our own streets and neighborhoods.

And if we are honest, we are trying to learn how, and some innovative, creative people are taking risks in the ways they proclaim and embody the Gospel. And they will be our leaders, as I doubt this will be a top-down movement (the Spirit is not limited to top-down movement). I’m mindful of something Sean Rowe said when he served as our consultant at the Abilene Summit. He said, “I’m tired of hearing about how we need to think outside the box.” That got my attention. He said, “There is no box – except for the box we make for ourselves.”

One thing we know: the Holy Spirit is not confined to a box – not even a box with a steeple or a bell tower. The Holy Spirit is present, yes; but confined, no. And neither is the Body of Christ. We are part of a movement – the Jesus Movement. And our context calls for a new interior posture – a shift from “come and see” to “Go!” “Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to all creation.”

I believe the Diocese of Fort Worth is uniquely positioned for this new day – this reformation or emergence. By now I’ve heard some of your stories – enough to have some sense of the level of your commitment to our expression of the faith; enough to know the sacrifices you have made, and how much it has cost many of you to be Episcopalians in North Texas.

And in the midst of it all, I see joy, and hope, and a sense of purpose, and the knowledge that we make a difference in North Texas. And there is no whining; it's obvious that this is a "no-whining zone." Yet if we are honest, we see all the emotions which are associated with grief. We have suffered loss, and with all loss comes corresponding grief. We don't deny grief, any more than we deny death. Resurrection does not deny death; it changes it, transforms it.

And I would suggest we are being changed, transformed, resurrected. I have told our clergy that I have a running interior dialogue about the question of resuscitation and resurrection. (I ask the same question in Northwest Texas, by the way.) Resuscitation is a good thing; I suspect Lazarus was happy with it. But, it's not resurrection. I don't believe we are called to resuscitate the exact same church, and neither do you – I know. We are called to be open to resurrection to new life, a new body.

We have some things to celebrate, some outward, visible signs of new life. In this calendar year you presented more than 100 baptized Christians for Confirmation. You planted a new congregation in Wise County, which I have made a Mission Station. Clergy left full time positions in other dioceses to take part time positions here, because they sensed a call to be part of this. We now have clergy in place in every congregation.

And with Floyd McNeely's leadership, we are taking steps toward a campaign to fund our future – a future that might imagine such things as bringing back our seminary graduates to serve in this diocese, and moving our part-time clergy to full-time, and growing our congregations, and planting new congregations, and initiating new campus ministries, as we proclaim and embody the Gospel which changes lives and changes this world.

Bishop Curry says that the most important word in the Great Commission to “Go, therefore, and make disciples” is the word “go.” I want to suggest another equally important word – a word easy to overlook: “therefore.” “Therefore” implies that something happened before the commission to go. The 28 chapters in Matthew’s Gospel before Jesus gives us the Great Commission make up that “therefore,” and that “therefore” tells us WHY we go. Why?

I like to watch an internet program called TED Talks. If you’re not familiar with TED Talks, it’s a global set of conferences formed to disseminate “ideas worth spreading.”

The idea worth spreading which I bring to our attention is a simple idea popularized by the speaker, Simon Sinek, called the Golden Circle. The Golden Circle has an outer ring, a middle ring, and an inner circle. The outer ring says “WHAT.” The middle ring says “HOW.” The inner circle says, “WHY.”

Every organization – every person, for that matter – knows WHAT they do. They make computers. They play baseball. They provide health care. Some, even many, know HOW they do it.

A few, according to the speaker, know WHY. If you’re operating a business, making a profit is not WHY you do it; making a profit is a result. A few know WHY, and the exceptional, memorable organizations and people know WHY. They start in the center of the circle and move from the inside out. They answer WHY first. They start with WHY.

And the speaker gives a couple of compelling examples. The now famous Wright Brothers were in pursuit of achieving powered human flight, but they were not alone.

Samuel Langley wanted to be the first to fly, and he had the recipe for success. The War Department had contributed \$50,000 to create this flying machine, so he had money. He personally had a high profile, for he held a seat at Harvard – and the New York Times was following his progress. He, and everyone on his team, had an education; he hired the best minds money could buy.

The Wright's had no money; they funded this project by selling their bicycle shop. They had no publicity before success, and not a single person on their team had a college education. But the Wrights were driven by a cause, a purpose beyond themselves. The Wrights imagined changing the course of world history.

Langley wanted to be famous and rich. Langley was in pursuit of the results, not the cause. And just to prove that's true, after the Wrights took flight, after they became first, he quit. He was interested in the fame and the resulting commercial success. The Wrights were driven by a purpose. They started with WHY.

Another example. In 1963, 250,000 people showed up at the mall in Washington, DC. Nobody received invitations in the mail; nobody looked up the date on the website. 250,000 people showed up to hear the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

The speaker points out that Dr. King was not the only person who had suffered in pre-civil rights America. Dr. King was not the only great orator. But Dr. King had a gift. Dr. King didn't stand up in front of 250,000 people and tell them WHAT needed to change in America. He told people what he believed. He started with

WHY. He told them what he believed – that there are two types of laws, the laws of the Higher Authority and (what he called) the laws of man, and until the laws of man were consistent with the laws of God we did not have a just society.

Dr. King started with WHY, not WHAT. He gave the “I have a dream” speech; not the “I have a plan” speech. We don’t give our lives to a 5-point plan, or even a plan to fund our future. Dr. King gave the “I have a dream” speech. He started with WHY, with purpose, with cause. He started with what gets us up in the morning: WHY.

The passage from today’s Gospel in the celebration of the Eucharist reads: “Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to all creation.” This strikes to the core of our purpose as baptized people. As living members of the Risen Body of Christ, as “Los Brazos de Dios,” we proclaim and embody (en-flesh) the Gospel – the Good News of God’s love for all people.

What I do as a bishop is oversee a diocese – in the Greek “bishop” means overseer. That’s what I do. Rectors have things they do; deacons and chaplains have things they do; wardens, and altar guild members, and sextons, and vestry members, and secretaries, and those who make mission trips, and treasurers, and chancellors, and those who build Habitat Houses have things they do.

But if we are honest, it’s the WHY that gets the juices flowing, the WHY that sustains us when we are grinding it out in our necessary and sometimes difficult work; it’s the WHY which moves us to offer ourselves sacrificially. It’s the purpose, the cause. It’s what we believe – what we give our hearts to.

I believe in the power of the Gospel – the power of the Good News of God’s grace as revealed in Jesus – to raise the dead to new life. I not only believe it; I’ve seen it. Maybe you’ve heard Mark Twain’s response to the question of infant baptism. When asked if he believed in infant baptism, he said, “Believe in it? Hell, I’ve seen it.”

I not only believe in the power of the Gospel to raise the dead to new life, I’ve seen it. I’ve experienced it. And so, too, have you. And yet Mark Twain only got it half right. To believe something is more than an intellectual exercise. To believe something is to give your heart to it.

In the sermon preached at his installation as our new Presiding Bishop, Michael Curry told us a “why” story, a story which took place sometime in the 1940s.

He says, “The armed forces had not yet been desegregated . . . ‘Brown vs the Board of Education’ of Topeka, Kansas had not yet been issued. Long before Rosa Parks stood up for Jesus by sitting down on that bus in Montgomery; before Jackie Robinson was playing for the Dodgers; before Martin Luther King, Jr was in seminary . . .”

“... an African-American couple went to an Episcopal Church one Sunday morning. They were the only people of color there. The woman had become an Episcopalian after reading CS Lewis’ ‘Mere Christianity,’ finding the logic of his faith profoundly compelling. Her fiancé was then studying to become ordained as a Baptist preacher.”

“But there they were on America’s segregated Sabbath, the only people of color at an Episcopal Church service of Holy Communion according to the 1928 Book of Common Prayer.”

“When the time came for communion the woman, who was confirmed, went up to receive. The man, who had never been in an Episcopal church, and who had only vaguely heard of Episcopalians, stayed in his seat. As he watched how communion was done, he realized that everyone was drinking real wine – out of the same cup.”

“The man looked around the room, then he looked at his fiancé, then he sat back in the pew as if to say, “This ought to be interesting.””

“The priest came by uttering these words as each person received the consecrated bread: “The Body of our Lord Jesus Christ which was given for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life. Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for thee, and feed on him in they heart by faith with thanksgiving.””

Next, the cup. “Would the priest really give his fiancé communion from the common cup? Would the next person at the rail drink from that cup after she did? Would others on down the line drink after her from the same cup?”

“The priest came by speaking these words to each person as they drank from the cup: “The Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ which was shed for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life. Drink this in remembrance that Christ’s Blood was shed for thee, and be thankful.””

“The people before her drank from the cup. “The Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ ...’ Another person drank. ‘Preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life.’ The person right before her drank. ‘Drink this in remembrance that Christ’s Blood was shed for thee ...’ Then she drank. ‘And be thankful.’ Now was the moment her fiancé was

waiting for. Would the next person after her drink from the cup? He watched. The next person drank. “The Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ which was shed for thee ...’ And on down the line it went, people drinking from the common cup after his fiancé, like this was the most normal thing in the world.”

“The man would later say that it was that reconciling experience of Christ in the sacrament of the Eucharist that brought him into the Episcopal Church ..., and he said, ‘Any Church in which blacks and whites drink out of the same cup know something about the Gospel that I want to be part of.’”

Bishop Curry tells us, “The couple later married and gave birth to two children, both of whom are here today, and one of whom is the 27th Presiding Bishop.”

We know something about the Gospel. On our clear days we proclaim and embody the Gospel. Stories like this one are why we do it. I suspect you have stories of your own – stories of acceptance, stories of liberation, stories of forgiveness, stories of healing, stories of reconciliation, stories of resurrection – because what God did in the first 28 chapters of Matthew’s Gospel, God does today. The point of telling the Good News of the first 28 chapters of Matthew is not simply that it happened once upon a time, however true. We tell the story of God’s love, because God’s love has the power to change lives and change this world now.

And as I look out among you – a diocese who “knows something about the Gospel that I want to be part of” (to quote Michael Curry’s father) – I see people who believe that. You have given your hearts to it. You have given your hearts to the One Who raises the dead. And I am humbled to serve you, as together, we “go into all the world and preach the Gospel to all creation.”