



The Episcopal Diocese of Hawai‘i

The Right Reverend Robert L. Fitzpatrick
Bishop

THE BISHOP’S ADDRESS

at the Annual Meeting of the Convention of the Diocese of Hawai‘i
The Cathedral of St. Andrew, Honolulu, Hawai‘i
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The address was to have begun with a short clip from the “Wrath of Khan” where Captain Kirk says he doesn’t believe in No-Win Scenarios, unfortunately there was a technical problem (the Bishop still encourages a viewing of the movie just for fun). While the address was being presented, images from Star Trek were shown on the overhead behind the Bishop.

All right, I am a product of my generation. I love Star Trek – especially the original series.

My sons know it and they often send me links for those online quizzes that tell you which character you are most like – or at least you seem to fool yourself that you’re most like.

Yes, in Star Trek quizzes, I come out as James T. Kirk. The first time I took one and I came out as Kirk, my older son, Ed, commented, “Dad, we all knew that already. You’d rather go do it and figure out the details later. You seem to always figure it out, but the rest of us are a bit worried for a while. You’re certainly no Earl Grey–drinking Picard, and you have way too much emotion to be Spock. Yes, James T. Kirk.”

And besides, “I don’t believe in the no-win scenario.”

Especially for the Church.

So, I’m here today to let you know where I think we’re headed. Last year was about celebrating the past 150 years. It was a big party and great fun. That was last year.

Looking ahead, who are we called to be?

One Body, One Mind, One Spirit: The Episcopal Church in Hawai‘i serving Jesus Christ.

Notice I didn't say the congregations or even the Diocese – but the Church. *One Church – One Body of Christ* – with different sites responding to different needs with One Spirit and acting with One Mind.

One Body, One Mind, One Spirit.

I call all of you to be part of “The Episcopal Church in Hawai'i” serving together as One Body, seeking One Mind, empowered by One Spirit.

What do I mean?

We're going to jump right in.

I am convinced that the parochialism of the past is no longer helpful or even that meaningful in a small diocese such as ours. We live in a small state and on small islands – relatively. That is true even for the Big Island. In some dioceses with the same number of people as ours, it is not uncommon for there to be a five- or six-hour drive between Episcopal churches.

There is little difference between an organized mission and a parish in this Diocese. With a few exceptions, the distinction has no real meaning. We worship from the same Prayer Book. We use the same Bible. We have the same name – the same Bishop. We are The Episcopal Church in Hawai'i. Together we are one Body. Separately as individual congregations, we will dwindle and fade. Together we can flourish.

Our churches are not trees standing in a field, or even in an orchard.

The Standing Committee suggested a new image when I described my vision of the Church in Hawai'i.

That image was the Banyan Tree.

[From point forward in the speech, images of banyan trees were also projected on the screen behind the Bishop]

Jesus teaches something of the image in John 15:5: “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, then you will produce much fruit. Without me, you can't do anything.”

The image is delightful in that the branches reach up and the roots pour down.

We are all from one tree – Jesus Christ. Early in the life of the Church, the first Christians appropriated the image for Christ by looking to Isaiah 1:11: “A shoot will grow up from the stump of Jesse; a branch will sprout from his roots.”

I see The Episcopal Church in Hawai'i as a Banyan tree spread out all over the islands, putting down roots in local communities and reaching into heaven.

One Body, One Mind, One Spirit: The Episcopal Church in Hawai'i serving Jesus Christ.

What does that mean?

We must be rooted.

One Body. One Mind. One Spirit.

Faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, as God Incarnate, is central to all that we do. This is the anchor root.

I have a profound belief in the Incarnation. Jesus Christ is God for me. In Jesus Christ, God is made fully known. In Jesus Christ, God took flesh and lived among us, and as a consequence the person of every man and every woman is sacred. Because of Jesus Christ, every human being is an icon – a holy image – of God.

As Archbishop William Temple wrote, "...the Word of God does not consist of printed propositions; it is living; it is personal; it is Jesus Christ. That living Word of God speaks to us through the printed words of Scripture; and all our study of those printed words helps us to receive it. But the point of vital importance is the utterance of the Divine Word to the soul, the self-communication of the Father to His children..."

We are rooted in Jesus Christ.

Michael Ramsey, another Archbishop of Canterbury, wrote that "[l]iving through dying is what faith means; it is what baptism means, it is what Holy Communion means; it defines the life to which every Christian is called.... [Every Christian] will, in following Christ, devote himself to the removing of suffering from his fellows whenever possible, supporting every effort to reduce its causes and its incidence."

Our faith in Jesus Christ must be rooted in the Scripture, the Sacraments, and Service to others. We do this to have a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

Scripture, Sacrament, and Service.

To know God in the narrative of Scripture,
To be fed by God in the bread and the wine, the Body and the Blood, of the Sacrament.
To serve God in the flesh and blood of human beings just like Jesus Christ – the rejected, the hungry, the houseless.

One Body, One Mind, One Spirit:

Formed together by Scripture, Sacrament, and Service.

These three require us to be in relationship.

We need other people. We have to keep learning.

As Captain Kirk once said, “You know the greatest danger facing us is ourselves, an irrational fear of the unknown. But there’s no such thing as the unknown – only things temporarily hidden, temporarily not understood.”

I know many have been involved with Education for Ministry. This is a four-year program designed for lay education and discernment for lay ministry in a small group. It does require considerable commitment and personal discipline to complete the program. I commend it to you as one possibility. It is particularly effective when offered by island across congregations.

I have been told that there is a desire for shorter-term adult programs and I will encourage a new Formation Committee to help with this.

What I can offer is an online Bishop’s Bible study to begin during the first week of Advent. I will post a weekly reflection with questions online. My hope is that as The Episcopal Church in Hawai’i we can walk through the Gospel according to Luke and Luke’s Acts of the Apostles. I will ask you to read a chapter (sometimes two) a week. I will also invite guest commentators to join me now and then. This could be used for a small group study or for personal reflection. My focus will be on what the story means for us as The Episcopal Church in Hawai’i. I am inviting you to ask: What is God’s Spirit saying to The Episcopal Church in Hawai’i? It can also give you an opportunity to give me feedback and seek with me God’s mission for The Episcopal Church in Hawai’i.

I also hope that through this Bible study, relationships will be formed and then leaders – lay and ordained – can be raised up. We have to keep learning about our faith and our communities. We do that together.

In these changing times, we sometimes can’t get beyond ourselves. Our local church. Our own needs. Our local crisis.

We confuse the leaf for the whole tree.

Local leadership sometimes gets so worried about the clump of leaves in their kuleana that it becomes easy to get upset. To be anxious.

You are not alone.

I want to spend more time with wardens and other lay leaders to get a sense of what is happening in local congregations and neighborhoods. Local lay training on each island with me

– and with Peter, Liz, and others. The “others” is very important. We have the skills and the expertise to share among ourselves within The Episcopal Church in Hawai‘i to engage God’s mission. It is already happening as clergy ask for help with thrift shops, personnel issues or accounting, and lay folk from other churches go to help. We must call on the lay leaders and clergy in neighboring churches.

We must ask for help. We must ask for prayers. We must be willing to help. We need each other.

I need your help. I need your prayers. I need you.

You need help. He needs your help. She needs our help. We all need prayers. We need each other. We need God.

One Body, One Mind, One Spirit.

I also need you to help me explain that there is no large bureaucratic Diocese with buckets of money somewhere here on the second floor of the Cathedral. All of our diocesan policies were written and enacted by clergy and lay people of the Diocese – a committee, a commission, the Diocesan Council, the Standing Committee, the Convention – years (and sometime decades) ago. Usually they were written to answer an immediate need. Canon Liz, Peter, and others in my office are following the policies your predecessors established for good reasons.

There is a resolution before you at this Convention asking that a special Task Force be formed to review our Constitution, canons, by-laws, policies – you know, all the organizational stuff. We need to downsize and simplify to meet the needs of the 21st century. Most importantly, the resolution asks that the review take place and proposals be shared for feedback before anything is brought to Convention. I hope we can do this in an open, collaborative way.

I’ve also asked the staff to make a list of all that they do for congregations so that you – the leaders of The Episcopal Church in Hawai‘i – can better explain all that is done for the congregations by the few people in my office. You can’t explain if you don’t know.

Beyond that, I think we need more time together by island and, on O‘ahu, by region to discuss God’s mission in our place. We must engage one another to come to one Mind.

We are too small to be a top-down system.

Many of you know that a “Property Task Group” made up of members of Standing Committee and Diocesan Council produced a report on the state of our buildings and property. The report is entitled “Phase 1-A Report.” It is a look at our property and buildings as assets and liabilities.

Some have asked me if this report includes a “hit list” of what churches will be closed. No, it is not a hit list. The report provides data, but our work is not finished

The next phase of work will be to engage every island (and region of O‘ahu) to look at our property as assets of The Episcopal Church in Hawai‘i as a whole. Can the mission and ministry carry on at another site? Do we need so many buildings and property in a given area? Is the asset being used effectively for ministry? Has the building become a clubhouse for the members or is it a center of discipleship? Is the property essentially a rental unit so that a few people can get together on Sunday morning for an hour with Communion followed by a cup of coffee? If a given local congregation disappeared tomorrow would anyone really notice – except maybe the kids at the preschool or those who rent a parking space in the church’s lot?

There is an important difference between membership and discipleship. Clubs have members. Jesus Christ has disciples. Members pay dues to the club. Disciples of Jesus Christ give their all for the Mission of the Church. Members worry about themselves and their own needs and their own preferences. Disciples focus on the needs of the local neighborhood and those not in the Church. Members want to be comfortable and served by the staff. Disciples know they are the servants and are willing to risk to share God’s love.

We will have to be honest and open about our ministry.

No Bishop, no Standing Committee, no Diocesan Council, no one wants to close churches or sell property. We all want thriving ministries that are centers of Scripture, Sacraments, and Service. We aren’t, however, in the business of providing clubhouses for a few people to gather on Sunday morning. We – no, I as Bishop – have a responsibility to ensure there is pastoral care for those who need it in old age and infirmity. I accept that. I cannot promise it will be in a particular building or with your private chaplain. I don’t know that we can or should keep all the property that we have when the resources could be used for expanded ministry and to fulfill God’s mission in other parts of the islands. What I can promise is that there will be no surprises and that everyone will be part of the conversation. The conversations cannot take place in isolated congregations, but must be part of an overall conversation by island or region of O‘ahu, and they must take place with congregations and clergy with the elected leadership of the Diocese and me. Likewise, such gatherings may discern that we need to develop new congregations either in new communities or within established churches to reach new people.

We don’t need to be afraid of the unknown. We have one another. We have Jesus Christ.

We are One Body, One Mind, One Spirit.

The roots of this tree of life – The Episcopal Church in Hawai‘i – spread out to different places in new and sometimes messy ways.

The One Spirit is an essential fertilizer of this tree of life.

I will ask members of the Standing Committee and others to help develop a local model of group spiritual renewal and communal discernment for our congregations and Diocese. I hope

this can be a way for us to be open to the Spirit and to new possibilities for mission – as the Church and as individual Christians.

One of the qualities of Captain Kirk that I most admire is that he was always part of the away team.

As Kirk said, “Risk is our business. That’s what this starship is all about. That’s why we’re aboard her.”

That is true of the Church too.

I would like to change the nature of my visitations.

I will continue the two-year cycle with a Sunday visitation to every congregation at least every 24 months.

Frankly, that has worked well and is not that different from the 18-month cycle used by previous bishops. I hope the Sunday visits will always include a time to teach. I hope that can happen even in churches that normally don’t have a Sunday morning education time.

I would like to better focus the weekday visits in 2014. I hope they can take place on Wednesday evening and will include a time for a simple meal, preaching, prayer, and renewal. I hope that all the congregations on an island – or region of O’ahu – will be invited to the Wednesday evening service at whatever church I am visiting. I hope my visitations can focus on teaching and renewal. Pulling us all together as One in the Spirit.

I will work to have office hours in local churches. Come see me. We can talk story. We can pray.

We will dig our roots deep into the ‘aina.

Captain Kirk always had advisors with different worldviews. As he said to Bones, “One of the advantages of being a captain, Doctor, is being able to ask for advice without necessarily having to take it.”

Now, I have my office staff:

My own Spock is Irina (though she sees herself as Seven of Nine). Liz is too often my Dr. McCoy patching things up. Peter is the Scotty in the engine room. June, Sarah, and Katrina are in the crew. I am grateful for all they do.

I must say that I depend for advice as much from the Standing Committee. Their work on the Diocesan Mutual Ministry Review helped to shape much that is in this address. I must also say that my monthly conversations with Liz Zivanov as President of Standing Committee have been helpful and something of a joy.

And from the clergy, I want and receive invaluable advice and care.

It is my desire that we can meet together more often in 2014. These are interesting times. We will need to support one another. I count on my experienced clergy to mentor less-experienced clergy. The clergy will have to make the time to meet.

We are blessed to have two seminarians – Jar Pasalo and Annalise Castro – who hope to return to the islands in a couple of years. We will need to be sure that we have curacies for them or we will lose them to a diocese in North America.

Some of our congregations need ordained leadership, but find it increasingly difficult to maintain full-salaried clergy. The finances, size, or location of such congregations make a traditional model of clergy leadership difficult. Furthermore, the cultural and community needs invite different styles and experiences in ordained leaders.

Local formation for ordained leadership – Naimiloa for vocational deacons and Waiolaihui'ia for Priests – will provide ordained leadership as part of a shared ministry with other congregations.

My personal hope is that through these programs and through traditional seminary education, in ten years many of our clergy will have local ties to the islands. That can provide family and personal connections for the long-term leadership of the Church rooted in the islands.

The Episcopal Church in Hawai'i must be broad and welcoming.

When former Presiding Bishop and second Bishop of our Diocese, Bishop Ed Browning, declared that "there will be no outcasts in the Church," he was speaking to and for us.

For me, that means making room for new people. I recently was interviewed by a reporter of a small local magazine. The reporter wrote me afterwards to ask, "Why haven't I heard of The Episcopal Church in before now?" He went on about how we were "catholic" and "inclusive." He asked for a referral to a local congregation – I gave him the names of the three churches nearest to where he lives.

We don't communicate our message to the world very well. We are the inclusive, liberal catholic church. That is part of our core identity. We struggle with that identity. We don't always agree. But we strive together to be...

One Body, One Mind, One Spirit.

But I am convinced there is room in our tree for everyone to be fed.

We have to communicate better.

With each other, we need to use e-News and e-Chronicle. Sybil is doing a great job. But we – the leaders of The Episcopal Church in Hawai‘i – have to be subscribed to it and we have to read it. No excuses are acceptable. If you are an active leader – lay or ordained – you must have access to and read the electronic communication of The Episcopal Church in Hawai‘i. Please signup at www.eosicopalhawaii.org (at the bottom of the page).

Irina is training to help us do online seminars. We will have more meetings online in 2014 – with much less travel.

I will work on trying to have a couple of mailings a year. We have a limited database – a thousand or so names of leaders. We need help gathering the names and contact information for everyone in the Diocese.

Communication is really all about relationships.

Let Sybil know what is going on locally and please support one another. Share with one another.

My friends, we need one another.

The world needs our message. We will find a way to let the world know in 2014.

I will ask the Standing Committee to help me explore the ways and cost of getting the name of the Episcopal Church in Hawaii out into the community.

More people need to hear a message like that of “A Cup of Cold Water” on Maui.

A shared ministry of all our Maui churches, grounded in prayer and Scripture, arising from God’s people to serve those the world has overlooked, forgotten, or ignored.

This is One Body, One Mind, One Spirit. This is The Episcopal Church in Hawai‘i.

This is an example of Christian discipleship that holds together faith and works, personal and social holiness, physical and spiritual concerns, works of piety and works of mercy.

It is certainly not the only example – the St. James’ Saturday afternoon beach Mass, the Farmers Market on Thursdays at St. Clement’s, the Community Garden at St. Paul’s, Kekaha; and others. This is The Episcopal Church in Hawai‘i meeting the world in the local community: Disciples of Jesus Christ being about God’s mission.

I think the next year will be our time for renewal and engagement. We have examples. We have one another.

I don’t believe in the no-win scenario.

Not in the Church.

There will be much to do. We have hard decisions ahead.

We also are One Body, One Mind, One Spirit.

We are The Episcopal Church in Hawai'i.

And so,

“Glory to God, who is able to do far beyond all that we could ask or imagine by his power at work within us; glory to him in the church and in Christ Jesus for all generations, forever and always. Amen” (Eph. 3:20-21).