

THE FORTY-SIXTH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE CONVENTION
OF THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF HAWAI‘I
HONOLULU, HAWAI‘I



Saturday, October 25, 2014

Convention Address
The Right Reverend Robert L. Fitzpatrick, Bishop



Aloha kakou,

I deeply appreciate that you all are here. I know that when I suggested last year that this might need to be a two-day Convention, that it would be a burden on some of you – both lay delegates, and bi-vocational clergy and chaplains. Some of you had to take the day off yesterday to be here. Thank you. I am grateful for your time and your ministry.

This year's Convention Address, like this entire Convention, is going to be a bit different than ones in past years. There is no movie clip. I am going to try to keep it short. I have submitted a written report on the past year. It is in your packets – along with graphs on average Sunday attendance and plate and pledge giving for the Diocese and every congregation covering the past decade. I'll leave that for you to read and prayerfully consider. I have also included time after lunch for questions and to talk story. Consider this less of an address and more of the beginning of a family meeting about the next year. Nothing flashy.

I was on a call recently with a seminary professor. She mentioned that Hawai'i was one of the few dioceses that had had an increase in average Sunday attendance the past couple of years. It was a sign for me that perhaps the dip after the economic crisis of 2009 has ended and, more importantly, we have a renewed vitality as a Diocese. More, however, it was a mark of the wonderful ministry of the clergy and lay leaders of this Diocese – of you all. Thank you. I want to particularly thank the clergy. I am proud of you. I feel supported by you as your Bishop and I deeply appreciate your ministries to God's people. Mahalo.

As we look to the next year, I want to reaffirm my three primary goals as Bishop:

First, I have asked us to explore new models of "Shared Ministry."

Because we live in highly interconnected islands within relatively short distances from one another, we have to work together. The age of isolated congregations is passing quickly. How does "shared ministry" look?

There is no set model. There is no diocesan master plan. Please remember, the office of the Bishop is made up of five full-time staff (including me), two part-time staff, some contract help, and volunteers. Peter, Sarah and I are the program staff – the Bishop, the Treasurer and the half-time Youth Director (So, maybe one and half time between us). That is why I don't use the term diocesan office. That sounds way too big. It's the Office of the Bishop. Your elected leadership

includes twelve people on Diocesan Council and eight on Standing Committee. There is not much of a hierarchy. We have a very flat system. That is why we need shared ministry.

What are we sharing? Expertise, time, fellowship, buildings, and, yes, even money. We are Episcopalians working, serving and praying together in our local context. We together are the Body of Christ in the world.

“A Cup of Cold Water” is one example of a shared ministry caring for the houseless and marginalized on Maui that grew into a diocesan ministry that now includes other churches, Buddhist congregations, and unchurched volunteers.

West Oahu’s shared ministry continues to evolve. Right now it is four congregations working together toward an integrated budget and sharing clergy. It is also a Sunday evening Ilocano/English service that is part of St. Paul’s, but worshipping at St. Stephen’s. It is also a congregation of Pacific Islanders looking to become part of the Episcopal Church as a community at St. Philip’s. More, it is shared ministry of care and feeding for the houseless on the beach along the Waianae coast.

Shared ministry might be something like the folk of St. James reaching out from Waimea to help St. Columba’s Church, Paauilo, re-establish as a congregation.

Increasingly, confirmation classes are being done by congregations together. Planning seasonal classes is happening. Churches without settled clergy are calling on other clergy for help.

It is about the ministry and not the buildings. It is reimagining church in new places and in new ways. New communities and new possibilities.

For some, it might mean a new relationship with Camp Mokule‘ia (see <http://www.campmokuleia.com>) – adopting a room or joining a work project to renovate the middle building. Some congregations have already started to support the the children’s cancer camp. Trinity Sunday will become Camp Mokule‘ia collection Sunday in the Diocese. Camp Mokule‘ia is a shared ministry of the congregations of the Diocese.

Second, I have focused on raising and forming leaders for ministry in Hawai‘i.

The local formation of Priests and Deacons continues. A new class will begin in January. Waiolaihui‘ia uses a curriculum from the Iona Initiative, which is based on the program at the Iona School for bivocational priests and deacons in the Diocese of Texas. The Iona Initiative started as seven rural dioceses (Oklahoma, Arkansas, Wyoming, Mississippi, Nebraska, Northwest Texas, and West Texas) joined with the Diocese of Texas and the Seminary of the Southwest to create a curriculum that can be delivered to rural or remote dioceses for their own formation program. God, the Standing Committee and the people willing, the first four candidates for ordination to the priesthood will be ordained in early 2016.

We continue our diocesan relationship with Virginia Theological Seminary (see <http://www.vts.edu>). In fact, our two seminarians are doing well there. To encourage our

seminarians to return to Hawai‘i, Council’s proposed budget includes \$60,000 to help provide a curacy – an assistant position – after graduation.

The Seminary will also send a professor to be with us twice a year to teach and lead programs – at no charge. Lisa Kimball, Director of the Center for Ministry of Teaching and Professor of Christian Formation and Congregational Leadership (see <http://www.vts.edu/podium/default.aspx?t=124544>), will be with us during the first week of December. The program on Saturday, December 6th will be “A Nurturing Home as a Center of Spiritual Practice.” The focus of the day will be responding to the needs of congregations to help adults and children shape practices and habits that strengthen our faith in daily life. Our opportunities for Christian formation (with adults or children) have the most meaning when they then impact the way we live as the followers of Christ from day to day. Then in the spring, James Farwell, Professor of Theology and Liturgy (see <http://www.vts.edu/jamesfarwell?rc=0>), will be with us here in Hawai‘i. This is an ongoing part of a partnership that will hopefully include regular summer internships for seminarians, and virtual classes and programming for us. I hope all congregations are including Virginia in their annual support for theological education.

One of the things I have asked Lisa to do when she is with us in December is to begin a conversation about Confirmation. We have very uneven preparation for Confirmation in this Diocese. The whole Episcopal Church is trying to discern the meaning of Confirmation in our common life. Likewise, we have no specific authorized liturgical way of welcoming an adult, baptized in another tradition into the Episcopal Church except Confirmation and Reception. When the Bishop welcomes a former Roman Catholic with the words “we recognize you as a member of the one holy catholic and apostolic Church, and we receive you into the fellowship of this Communion,” it is a formula of welcome. Shouldn’t the same be true for a United Methodist or even a Baptist who comes into the Episcopal Church as a faithful adult Christian? Or perhaps, all adults could reaffirm with the words, “may the Holy Spirit, who has begun a good work in you, direct and uphold you in the service of Christ and his kingdom.” As the General Convention considers the place of Confirmation in the Episcopal Church, I would like us to explore what needs to be the norm for preparation in this Diocese for youth, for unchurched adults and for adult Christians new to the Episcopal Church. How do we liturgically formally welcome someone into the Episcopal Church? How is that different than a mature affirmation of faith by someone who was baptized as an adult?

As a Church, all Episcopalians have been asked to study Marriage. “Dearly Beloved: A Tool-kit for the Study of Marriage” (<https://extranet.generalconvention.org/staff/files/download/10613>) have been prepared by the Task Force on the Study of Marriage (<http://www.episcopalchurch.org/notice/task-force-study-marriage-releases-study-guide-discussion-resources>). I think it could make a valuable four-session Advent study. It could be a part of discussion groups. I would welcome a class or discussion using the resource during a visitation or as part of a regional ministry education activity.

I am concerned that we revitalize lay leader training. This is for wardens and treasurers, youth leaders and evangelists. I began in small ways last year meeting with altar guilds. That will expand in 2015. To help with this, more retreats will be offered at Camp Mokule‘ia to help the Episcopal Church.

My third focus has been a continued intention that new communities of faith – new congregations – will be developed and become part of our diocesan ‘ohana, and that our existing ones will grow as well.

The most important formation project over the next couple of years will be work with Eric Law and the Kaleidoscope Institute (<http://www.kscopeinstitute.org>). Eric is no stranger to the Diocese. A Priest in the Diocese of Los Angeles, he and his team will be with us on and off for three years. The training will be entitled “Holy Currencies Movement: Creating Missional and Sustainable Ministries.” He will work on training and developing a resource team with members from every island that can then help the congregations of the Diocese. The training will seek to empower churches and ministries to be missional, sustainable and interculturally competent. You will soon be hearing more about this exciting adventure.

I will also be asking the Property Task Force to continue its work. Our property and building are the greatest financial asset of the Diocese of Hawai‘i. We have to find new ways to utilize these assets for the mission of the Church. Having empty buildings six days a week is not serving God’s mission. We cannot be afraid to try new things. We cannot be held captive by mistakes of past generations.

I am also renewing my commitment to Planned Giving and Stewardship. We have made great strides as a Diocese with “Hō‘Ike Ulu Legacy Society of the Episcopal Diocese of Hawai‘i” This is a committed community of Episcopalians—stewards who have remembered their congregations, the Diocese, or another ministry in their wills or estate plans. I hope everyone in this room has remembered the Church in their wills. Bea and I have.

Likewise, for stewardship, it begins with personal witness. So, clergy and lay leaders – wardens and treasurers, you the leaders of the Diocese, each of you – need to be upfront and open about giving to the mission of the Church. I think this is a reasonable expectation of the congregation of their leaders – lay and ordained. It is hard to preach about stewardship or expect parishioners to give without open sharing about your personal giving. Yes, that goes for the Bishop too. Bea and I have tithed most of our married life (beginning early makes tithing easier). There have been hard times when our giving slowed. There have been times when medical bills took precedence, and then there was a couple of years when both boys were at ‘Iolani School and tuition costs overwhelmed our budget. Right now, however, we are again able to tithe (give 10% of our after-tax income – we haven’t quite made it to pre-tax – including my housing allowance) is given to the mission of the Church. Our giving is shared between the Cathedral (where Bea is a parishioner), mission congregations of the Diocese, Episcopal schools (on whose Boards I serve as Bishop), the Camp and other Church-related ministries. I welcome the opportunity to talk about planned giving or stewardship – at anytime and with anyone, with congregations or individual parishioners.

It is through missional, sustainable and interculturally competent ministries that we can reach out to form new congregations and strengthen current congregations. It is through new resources and giving that we have the means to reach out: to Pacific Islanders, through experimental worship, in new places, daring to care for the rejected and lonely – making them a part of our ‘Ohana.

Willing to fail for the Gospel or, better, to succeed with all the commotion and headaches that new energy and new folk bring.

2015 is going to be an interesting year.

I leave you, as I often do, with Paul's words (1 Corinthians 15:58):

“As a result of all this, my loved brothers and sisters, you must stand firm, unshakable, excelling in the work of the Lord as always, because you know that your labor isn't going to be for nothing in the Lord.”

Mahalo.