



A Pastoral Address to the People of God of the Convocation of Episcopal Churches in Europe

The Rt. Rev. Pierre W. Whalon, D.D.
Bishop in charge

October 15, 2009

Celebrating 150 Years of Mission in Europe

All bishops make an annual Address to their conventions and synods. Last year, I decided not to read my annual Address to the Waterloo Convention of the Convocation. The “Transformed By Stories” method, applied to the Convention as “Telling Our Stories”, seemed to preclude a lengthy talk. Instead, I issued a Pastoral Letter in the form of an Address, to be made available in all our congregations after Convention. As this seemed to be quite popular (!), I am repeating this way of addressing delegates, by addressing all of you. As we are continuing to apply the “TBS” method to the Convention in Geneva this year as well, we should have, I think, the same format for your Bishop’s Address.

Again, I am not requiring that your clergy read this to you. Instead, I am directing that this be made widely available to all of our over 4,000 members of the churches of the Convocation. Thank you very much for taking the time to read it.

“150 Years of Mission in Europe”? Yes indeed—longer, in fact. The Spirit of Jesus has been inspiring Episcopalians for mission in Europe since the late 18th century. We first appeared in Paris, but congregations did not begin to form on a permanent basis until the 1840s. The Paris congregation petitioned the General Convention to make a way for The Episcopal Church to have congregations outside the continental United States. In 1859 the then-Church of the Holy Trinity became the first official Episcopal parish outside the U.S under the canon we still operate under, known as “Congregations in Foreign Lands” (Canon I.15). This canon also called for the appointment of a “bishop-in-charge” to oversee such congregations. Parishes in

Florence, Rome, Geneva, Nice, and Dresden soon followed. While the canon was written to respond to our particular need in Europe, it signaled the beginning of a great era of missionary expansion in The Episcopal Church around the world. The Church of the Holy Trinity became a “pro-cathedral” (i.e., a parish that functions as a cathedral or seat of the Bishop in charge) in 1922.

Today The Episcopal Church has eleven dioceses, plus ours, operating outside the U.S., including its largest diocese, Haiti. So much sprang up from what must have seemed to the General Convention of 1859 to be a small effort. As we celebrate the official birth of what has become our Cathedral, we are also celebrating the birth of what came to be called the Convocation.

The vision that Dean Zachary Fleetwood and his leadership have developed for today’s Paris church is the plan to vastly improve the facilities of the Cathedral outside its glorious sanctuary. This will enable the Cathedral to meet its future mission and ministry needs. An ambitious €7 million campaign is underway as I write these lines, and a member of my Council of Advice, Betsy Blackwell, is co-chair. Already some €4.6 million has been pledged. Please pray for its complete success, so that the Cathedral’s people may go into the next 150 years with facilities that can finally enable even greater outreach to the City of Light and away to the ends of the Earth.

Why any Bishop’s Address? First, the canon law requires the Bishop to make an annual report to the convention. No getting out of that. Second, our scattered and diverse congregations, due to geography, national borders and cultures, and language, make all communication even more valuable than they would be otherwise. While our extraordinary diversity is a strength, in that we are adaptable to different mission contexts, it is also a constant challenge to our unity and identity. Third, there are many changes happening in the Convocation, The Episcopal Church, and the Anglican Communion.

So, first my report as Bishop, then a report on the Convocation, and finally the “Big Picture” and where we fit in.

Bishop’s Report

I report to you that I have preached and celebrated in our parishes and missions 27 times, meaning (besides the Cathedral) 24 trips away from Paris. Since October 2008, I have confirmed and received 53 people. On January 24, 2009, I ordained Richard Cole to the Diaconate.

We have said goodbye to three priests. The Rev. Laurette Glasgow has been received into the Anglican Church of Canada, Diocese of Ottawa, beginning a new ministry as curate in All Saints Church, Bells Corner. The Revs. Gray Temple, interim at Ascension, Munich, and Barbara Crafton, St. James, Florence, have gone on to their next assignments in the United States.

The Rev. Mary Ellen Dolan continues as Interim Rector of St. Augustine of Canterbury, Wiesbaden. (She also serves on the Commission on Ministry of the

Baptized, a.k.a COMB). On October 3, I led that parish in the opening retreat of their search for a new Rector. (I am not only the Bishop but also the deployment officer of the Convocation. In other words, I help congregations with search processes, as well as approving their choice of priest.)

In this regard it gives me great pleasure to introduce to you the Rev. Steven Smith, whom I instituted as Rector of Ascension, Munich, on September 27. He comes to us from Trinity Church, New York City. We also welcome the Rev. Mark Dunnam as Rector of St. James, Florence, formerly Canon to the Ordinary in the Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast. Parenthetically, that parish has a fine new organ just installed, built by the Willis Company of England. And welcome to the Rev. Russell Ruffino, whom I have appointed as Vicar of Resurrection, Orvieto, as of Advent I 2008. Please help me welcome them and their families to the Convocation.

There are other clergy present with us as well. The Rev. Val Littman, in charge of Grace Church, Florensac, France, is no stranger to the Convocation or our Convention. But now he has come as the priest in charge of a specialized mission, whose application the Council of Advice and I have accepted, and which I have asked you to give seat and voice as a mission of the Convocation.

Also with us are clergy licensed in the Convocation: the Revs. Mark Letters, presently from Copenhagen; Sarah Motley Fischer of Geneva; and Ted Karpf, also from Geneva. Fr. Karpf will address us on Saturday on the flu situation, speaking as a senior epidemiological analyst of the World Health Organization based in this city.

I made several people Postulants for Holy Orders: Gianfranco Giancaterino, of the Pescara Mission in Italy; Christopher Easthill, Ascension, Munich; Elizabeth Ewing, All Saints, Waterloo; and Ginger Strickland, the Cathedral of the Holy Trinity, Paris. There is one Candidate for Holy Orders, Mark Barwick, All Saints, Waterloo. There are also two other serious nominees in consideration as well. After a brief period without ordinands, here we go again! As you know, parishes that stimulate people to explore calls to ordained ministry are also helping all their members discern God's call upon their lives—a real sign of health! This is also a validation of the effectiveness of COMB's Vocational Discernment Conference, which about 100 people have attended so far, and which resumes next fall.

The Presiding Bishop, the Most Rev. Katharine Jefferts-Schori, has renewed the missionary status of Canon Jere Skipper, for another four years. This will make us all very happy to have this talented and committed woman continue as Canon for Communications and Administration. We have been able finally to resolve her visa status in France, despite the fact that France does not recognize missionaries the way, say, the United States Immigration Department does.

I also was a co-consecrator of the Rt. Rev. Harold Rein, new Bishop of the Catholic Christian Church of Switzerland, the Old Catholic Church in this country, on September 20 in Zurich. He sends his apostolic greetings to us gathered here in Convention.

Sadly, it is the unanimous finding of the Council of Advice that the Rev. Susan Skillen has “abandoned the communion of The Episcopal Church” by affiliating with

a schismatic group under a bishop ordained in Kenya and operating in the state of Massachusetts. As canon law requires of the Bishop, I have inhibited the Rev. Mrs. Skillen from the exercise of ministry for six months, beginning September 24, during which time she can contest this finding. Please pray for her, her family, and all concerned, including myself.

I finished my six-year term on the Standing Commission for Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations, and the Presiding Bishop has assigned me to the Executive Council's Committee on Social Responsibility in Investments. I finished my previous work by serving as vice-chair of the legislative committee for ecumenical and interreligious relations at the General Convention in July in Anaheim, California. Among other things, our own Tiffany Israel helped a drafting committee I oversaw to perfect the Theological Statement on Interreligious Dialogue, approved by Convention as an official teaching of the Church.

The *Association d'Entraide aux Minorités d'Orient* that I preside works with a task force for Iraqi religious minorities from the Immigration and Foreign Affairs Ministries of the Republic of France that has managed to bring so far 890 people out of Iraq and Syria to France, where they have been welcomed under the French tradition of asylum. All these people were directly threatened with death because of their religious belief, including many Muslims and Sabaens, not just Christians. Others, both French and Iraqi, do the hard work. My work is mainly to manage the working group itself. Episcopal Relief and Development contributed \$5,000 to the project. We expect the work to be completed in the fall of 2010. It should be noted that we expect most of these people to return to Iraq to rebuild their nation, once stability returns.

The Francophone Network of the Anglican Communion continues our work of developing resources in French for the four million francophone Anglicans. The support of the Presiding Bishop at the May meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council was crucial to that worldwide assembly's approval of the Network's resolution to create translation facilities for the other major languages used in the Anglican Communion: French, Spanish, Portuguese, and Mandarin.

Life in the Convocation

Overall, life is good! While the global financial crisis has not spared any of us, congregations or Convocation, we have been able to continue to grow into our mission in Europe.

We are now completing the fourth year of five in Mission 2006. First, let us recall our Vision Statement:

As a Convocation, we affirm together our commitment to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ by worship, word and example to people of all nationalities and denominations.

There is progress to report on all six mission priorities.

Youth: Jane Döbler of Christ-the-King, Frankfurt, now heads up the new Youth Commission, which is planning a major event next July in Geneva for young adults. Furthermore, training and coordination for Convocation youth ministers, as well as other Youth Across Europe events, are in the planning. At this point we do not envisage hiring a coordinator for youth ministry in the Convocation, but that possibility for the future is not excluded (a review of this question was called for in Mission 2006).

Training and Nurture: The European Institute of Christian Studies (EICS) is putting the finishing touches on the *Transformed By Stories Method*, produced with staff and financial help from the Episcopal Church Center, that I mentioned at the opening of this Letter. All delegates to the Convention in Geneva have received a DVD that shall be included in the final product, to be released early next year. The DVD uses last year's *Telling Our Stories* as an example of how to put together a TBS event, whether educational or organizational. As the delegates will have used the TBS Method for two years now, they should report to their congregations the effectiveness of this method for all sorts of congregational education needs. It has the great benefit of working in any language and any culture, as well as being otherwise fully adaptable to the needs of the congregation or diocese.

It includes a three-session program for introducing the Christian faith to people, in a way that elicits and honors their spiritual journey.

COMB has produced three Vocational Discernment Conferences, which have been very successful in helping some 100 attendees ask themselves what God wants them to do. The vast majority did not conclude that this involved ordination—it is the Lay Order that does the real work of the Church, of course. But satisfaction with the program is extremely high, and it shall continue to be offered again every year as long as at least 10 people register. A new Spirituality Conference, offered for previous attendees of the Discernment Conference, had its first iteration in March, and was also very successful.

Building Missions: We are welcoming the people of Grace Church, Florensac, France, into our midst, with their vicar, the Rev. Val Littman. This Anglophone congregation has met informally for several years, and after I visited there in May 2008, they decided to organize into a mission of the Convocation. It is located between Perpignan and Montpellier, near the Mediterranean coast.

St. Columban's, Karlsruhe, our oldest mission, has shown new signs of life and is growing. Fr Hanns Engelhardt continues to serve as priest-in-charge even though he has retired and turned over leadership to the bishop's committee and wardens.

I will shortly be making a visit to the Pescara mission of St. Paul's, Rome, who is a Postulant for Orders, Gianfranco Giancaterina, an Anglophone Italian. This is a community of italophones who discovered The Episcopal Church through our bilingual Italian-English Prayer Book. Do visit their excellent website at anglicani.it It has garnered significant interest, relatively speaking, among Italian internauts.

St. Boniface, Augsburg, and St. James the Less, Nürnberg, Germany, continue to develop under the leadership of the Rev. Dorothee Hahn for the Church of the

Ascension, Munich. I note with satisfaction the strong interest that Fr. Smith, Ascension's new Rector, has expressed in the parish's missions, already visiting them several times, twice with me.

Since November 2008 the *Mission Épiscopale de Rennes* has had a worship center, funded by grants from the Convocation, Christ Church, Clermont-Ferrand, and our convention host, Emmanuel Church. The Rev. Dr. George Hobson has been making monthly visits there. The Rt. Rev. Venuste Mutiganda, retired bishop of Butare diocese, Rwanda, who lives in Strasbourg, is advising them.

The Rev. Jennifer Adams-Maßmann, assisting at Christ-the-King, Frankfurt, has been working with All Saints military congregation, Heidelberg, to investigate the future of that congregation after the Army base closes. It has been in existence since 1945 as an Episcopal congregation, and has often sent delegates to Convention, as is their right.

The Rev. Pierre-Henry Buisson will complete his studies at Virginia Seminary in May. The program I announced last year, the development of French congregations under his leadership as an official missionary to France, is still operational, although the financial crisis and resulting budget cuts at the Domestic & Foreign Missionary Society may require that it be delayed a while. It should be remembered that our role in this effort is as helpers coming alongside, rather than making it a program of the Convocation.

There is renewed interest from the Bishop of the Armed Forces in starting a mission in Vincenza, Italy, among mostly Americans who work at the Department of Defense school headquarters there.

Which one will follow Christ Church, Clermont-Ferrand, in becoming our tenth parish?

Beyond all these specific initiatives, the renewed Committee on Mission Congregations, the Council of Advice, and I need to develop a long-range strategic plan to plant more missions around Europe, actively planning rather than just reacting to new developments. "Running after the Holy Spirit," as my predecessor Bishop Jeffery Rowthorn called it, is a good place to be—most of my Stateside colleagues would give their eyeteeth to be in that situation. But there is much more to do, and that will require a clear-eyed evaluation of opportunities, identification of resources to exploit them, increased coordination with sponsoring parishes, and new funding developed. The Spirit doesn't just pull, the Spirit also pushes.

Spirituality and Worship: I mentioned above the Spirituality Conference, which is one important initiative of COMB, under the leadership of the Rev. Clair Ullmann. The development of TBS' own program, concluding in Nice in January, was also designed to create opportunities for spiritual growth among its many participants.

There are exciting worship initiatives in the Convocation these days. "Sundays At Six" offers eucharistic worship in different styles and with a bilingual emphasis at the Cathedral in Paris on Sunday evenings. German congregations have been participating in the Celebration of Creation season this year. Local languages are

integrated in various ways around the Convocation. All four bilingual Prayer Books continue to sell well.

Social and environmental justice: Besides the Iraq refugee program, the Joel Nafuma Refugee Center and the Frankfurt Deportee Ministry continue to offer solace and direct aid to refugees and deportees in their respective countries. The homeless are fed in Paris and Florence, specifically, and other parishes and missions continue aid to people in their communities and around the world, especially elsewhere in Europe (Romania, Portugal), in Africa and Haiti.

Every one of our congregations, from the Cathedral (largest parish in the four Anglican European jurisdictions) to Pescara, shows awareness that it is sent first to its own city—all the inhabitants. Then the nation they are in, and then the world. What is needed is even greater awareness and action. We have not been chaplaincies for decades. Every congregation, as well as the Convocation itself, exists to serve the needs of all the people we encounter, not just of a certain nationality or language.

Some of our congregations have completed their Environmental Audits. “Going green” is not only a moral imperative, it is economical! We have also set up programs for flu prevention and overall awareness in place in recent months.

Leadership and visioning: We have made great strides in this area in particular. The Strategic Implementation Committee, set up as part of Mission 2006, has done an outstanding job under the leadership of Cindy D’Alimonte. The creation of the Handbook, Directory, surveys and statistics, and other programs they have created has helped immeasurably with the professionalization of the Convocation as a diocese. In this regard we owe a particular debt of gratitude to Helena Mbele-Mbong and the Rev. Luk de Volder. The website (soon to be re-designed) now contains a vast amount of information, nicely catalogued and easily available, that is replicated in a hard-copy Handbook in the possession of each congregation.

Each major commission has also produced or substantially revised guidelines for its particular area. COMB, chaired by the Rev. Kempton Baldrige, with Mr. Rainer Ullmann as Secretary, has new clear guidelines for ordination and licensed ministries, and has developed mentoring and continuing education criteria. Each ordinand has a “shepherd” to see him or her through the process. Besides also assigning each ordinand an academic adviser, EICS has produced a tremendous amount of materials relating to formation for licensed ministries, the Diaconate and the Priesthood, as well as the innovative *Transformed By Stories Method*. The former has been ably overseen by Lora Bernabei, while Felicity Handford, the chair of EICS, has worked with the latter. And do not forget our revised Child Protection Guidelines.

Next year, EICS will begin to offer courses in its Academy for Parish Leadership, which will provide training for new vestry members, treasurers, youth ministers, and so on.

An innovative international version of the Church’s anti-racism training program was developed with Episcopal Church Center staff, using our members as “guinea pigs”. They had as much to learn as we did about racism transposed outside the

American context. We can now offer our own certification in this area, as well as other required training.

Finally, at our last Convention in Waterloo, we changed our name from the Convocation of American Churches in Europe to the “Convocation of *Episcopal* Churches in Europe.” This reflects the reality that we are no longer chaplaincies for Americans in Europe. General Convention has accepted to revise the Constitution and Canons of The Episcopal Church to reflect this change.

Therefore we are officially the **Convocation of Episcopal Churches in Europe**. Please note that all documents and websites *need to reflect* this important change.

The General Convention

As has been the case since 1976, this General Convention was dominated by the question of the full inclusion of gay people in the life of the Church. In point of fact, the decisions of this summer’s General Convention did not change anything in this respect, despite numerous erroneous news reports to the contrary.¹

All member churches of the Communion have subscribed to the following: “We commit ourselves to listen to the experience of homosexual persons and we wish to assure them that they are loved by God and that all baptized, believing and faithful persons, regardless of sexual orientation, are full members of the Body of Christ.” (Lambeth 1998, resolution I.10.c, reiterating earlier Lambeth Conference resolutions). The question, of course, remains: what is the appropriate pastoral response? Certainly, at the very least, churches in the Anglican Communion must oppose local legislation that criminalizes being gay. But a positive affirmation is also necessary: since gay and lesbian people are beloved of God and fully members of Christ’s Body, the Church, they must be treated as such.

The question is, how does that translate into practice? The Convention passed a resolution that affirmed that many people in The Episcopal Church believe that gay people can enter into holy unions that the Church should bless, and that people in these unions can indeed be fit candidates for ordination to all three Orders, including bishops. The resolution also made clear that there is continuing disagreement among us, and that The Episcopal Church intends to remain a loyal part of the Anglican Communion. Another resolution asks for resources on same-sex blessings to be collected for study, and giving bishops latitude to address pastorally (i.e., unofficially) the situations in those American states that have legitimized unions or fully accept them as marriage. It should be noted that other states such as Montana have made celebrating such blessings into a criminal offense, reflecting the deep divisions within America as well as the church on this topic.

As the Presiding Bishop and President of the House of Deputies made clear in a letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury, we continue to participate in the moratoria on

¹ For more details, you can consult my article “What Didn’t Happen At General Convention” accessible at <http://bit.ly/1R2fw>

official blessings and ordinations currently being observed in the Anglican Communion, even though the third moratorium—stopping the intervention of foreign bishops in the United States—continues to be routinely flouted (see above, re: Susan Skillen).

Convention made other decisions, more significant, perhaps in the long run. We approved a full-communion agreement with the Moravian Church in the United States, which will make them equal partners just we are here in Europe with the Old Catholic Churches. We are slowly moving toward that status with the United Methodist Church, just as the Church of England is doing in its context.

Clergy discipline has been completely revamped, changing from a root metaphor of military justice to the disciplinary procedures of professional associations of accountants, lawyers, and doctors. The Canons Committee will recommend resolutions to implement the revision of Title IV, as it is known, to the Council of Advice for consideration and action at next year's convention in Nice. As you know, our own canons and congregational bylaws must follow exactly the canons of the General Convention.

In the U.S., health care and pensions will now be mandatory for all full-time lay employees of the Church, just as they have long been for the clergy. The implications for us in Europe are not yet clear, since substantially better offerings already exist for lay employees in various countries. But all will recognize the significance of this decision as a witness in the current debate over the right of access to basic health care raging in the United States.

The very significant theological statement on interreligious dialogue I discussed above passed virtually unanimously (a rarity). For those who may wonder about the orthodoxy of our church, here is an excerpt:

“We affirm the foundational Gospel proclamation that "Jesus is Lord" (I Corinthians 12:3), and therefore Jesus' Summary of God's Law: "love the Lord your God with all your hearts, with all your souls, and with all your minds, and to love your neighbor as yourself" (Mark 12:29-31; BCP, Catechism, page 851). For this reason we reach out in love and genuine openness to know and to understand those of other religion traditions.”
(Introduction)

The Church itself was not spared the brunt of the financial crisis. The Convention cut over \$25 million in its budget, necessitating the layoff of 40 employees. At the same time, funding for missionaries (“mission partners”) was increased.

Finally, among significant decisions of the Convention, besides our name change, the Convention called for a study by the relevant standing commissions and our leadership (i.e., the people you elect at our convention) to consider whether we should someday become a diocese. We certainly already act like one in every respect. Historically, new dioceses have been created with financial aid from the General Convention until they can support themselves.

The Anglican Covenant

Since 2004, the Archbishop of Canterbury has called for the consideration of an agreed statement of faith that could possibly help the Anglican Communion move beyond our present divisions. Called *An Anglican Covenant*, it is already in its third draft, with a final one to come out shortly. General Convention called upon all members, congregations, and dioceses to consider and discuss this document for possible action at the 2012 General Convention. Several members of the Council of Advice have already sent in responses and reactions. As time goes on, I will direct that a program for consideration of this important document be developed for use in our congregations. Working with the other three Anglican jurisdictions on the Continent, as well as our Old Catholic partners, will be critically important to our work.

My personal take on the idea is that *An Anglican Covenant* may or may not be what is needed, but the process by which we determine that is absolutely crucial to the development of the Anglican Communion into a deeper unity with one another.² Being part of a global church—the Roman Catholic Church’s only global partner—is vital on all sorts of levels. The mission work described above depends to a great extent on relations with other Anglicans elsewhere in the world. To be able to do mission in 164 countries (and counting), and with 80 million other Christians in our tradition, is a blessing that cannot be overestimated.

In any event, schism has never solved a single evil in the church’s life. It has only multiplied and compounded them.

In Closing—

As you can see, Gentle Reader, the Convocation of Episcopal Churches in Europe continues to grow and develop. We will need to consider Mission 2012 next—where will it lead us?

As I chair my ninth convention as your Bishop in charge (and become at year’s end the longest-serving Bishop in charge in our history, surpassing Bishop Stephen Bayne), you should know that I never fail to be surprised by the vitality and innovations in mission of our congregations and clergy. Former Presiding Bishop Frank Griswold led our clergy retreat in February and remarked to me that he thinks we have the best clergy corps in the Church. And I would add, the best corps of lay leaders. I am always unfailingly surprised by the new people who join our churches, and even ask to start new ones. The Anglican way of being Christian is not the only way to get to heaven, of course. But it is a way that, if followed, is reliable for making people holy here and now, and that works in any language, any nation, and culture.

“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever,” wrote the author to Hebrews (13:8) As we continue to grow and change after 150 years, we must always

² I have written two recent articles on the Covenant, found at <http://bit.ly/10iAsI> and <http://bit.ly/13wei>

be looking to his leadership and providence for all of us, and counting on the presence and inspiration of his Holy Spirit in all of our communities and in each of our hearts. For what is the same about Jesus is that he is faithful—the same as yesterday and today, and all the way into the future.

Even 150 years more. And beyond, until his coming in glorious majesty.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, starting with a small cross symbol followed by the name 'P Whalon' in a cursive script.

Bishop Pierre Whalon