

## ALWAYS AND EVERYWHERE

It is right and a good and joyful thing always and everywhere to give thanks.

### Address to Diocesan Convention 2008 How to love more than one neighbor at a time is a political question



BY BISHOP PAUL V. MARSHALL

**Christ Church, Reading  
October 10, 2008**

Sisters and Brothers,

It is a privilege again to sit with you as we celebrate our life together and take counsel for our next year's ministry in Northeast Pennsylvania. I am grateful to be able to do so with Bishop Jack at my side. He has become both a valued colleague and trusted friend in the last year.

I express your gratitude and my own to the people and rector of Christ Church in Reading. When Father Francis invited me to have the convention here, I was deeply touched. The labors of David Feick, Bruce Bengston, and many behind the scenes have been a real gift to all of us. If you have looked at the worship program, you know that each liturgy contains many first-rate musical offerings. I hope that you will savor them all with gratitude and joy. We are all grateful for the hospitality shown us in the parish hall.

I come to you profoundly moved by what you have accomplished in our New Hope campaign—you have taught me much about the joy and virtue of sacrificial giving. In that regard, I am going to interrupt myself to ask Mr. Charlie Barebo to give you the update on

New Hope. Nobody deserves more than Charlie does to have the opportunity to share this good news.

[New Hope Campaign chair Charlie Barebo announced that 1,010 families have made pledges amounting to \$3,755,000. Of this amount, some \$1,900,000 has been collected and \$400,000 disbursed.]

Thank you, Charlie. I would now like Father Daniel Gunn to tell us where the first New Hope grants for work in Northeastern Pennsylvania are going.

[Father Gunn, chair of the diocesan Social Ministries Committee, told delegates that three grants have been awarded locally: St. Anne's Trexlertown; St. George's Nanticoke and St. Stephen's Wilkes-Barre. Six additional parishes (Trinity West Pittston, Good Shepherd Scranton, St. Barnabas Kutztown, St. Clement's and St. Peter's Wilkes-Barre, Christ Church Reading, and St. Andrew's Allentown/Bethlehem) submitted preliminary proposals. They will be invited to submit full applications. Next spring, all parishes will once again be invited to submit proposals, which will be acted upon during the summer of 2009.]

Thank you, Father.

#### (I) In Pittsburgh: Working with those who remain

Some of you know that a convention held in Pittsburgh last week attempted to dissolve the union that diocese has with the Episcopal Church. I'm not lawyer enough to know if such an attempt will stand, or is even possible, since that diocese, like ours, was created by General Convention. No matter how that is decided, the rock-bottom truth is that a majority of the clergy and lay people present wished to join another church, an Anglican province in Argentina, and appear to have done so.

I do not know how any of this will come out. The legal part always gets the attention, so I can tell you that a judge has frozen the assets of all parties, and nobody is taking anything anywhere until this is sorted out.

Money is not what is on my mind, in these events, however. Bishop Duncan long ago spoke of his plans for what he called a "divorce" of his diocese from the Church, and did so in my hearing in the fall of 1996, seven years before Gene Robinson was even heard of. I have watched with growing sadness as the foundation was laid for last week's events. It has been painful for me because our work here in Bethlehem has been focused on finding ways to remain together in fellowship and mission, and as a diocese we know that where the

will is to labor and pray together, God provides the way, even through tears.

I do not bring this up because there is any way to put the genie back into the bottle. Rather, I bring it up because the Pittsburgh decision is the reminder to us all that whether we want to or not, leaders set the tone for their organizations—those who lead parishes in lay and ordained positions dare never forget that. Today's negativity may be tomorrow's cataclysm, and what people will do with you they will do to you. On the other hand, today's positive outlook, today's faith, today's acceptance of each other, will be tomorrow's opportunity for ministry.

But what can be done for those remaining to the west of us? On behalf of the other bishops in Pennsylvania, I have been in touch with the leadership of Episcopalians in Pittsburgh who wish to remain in their church. They represent a wide range of opinion, from very conservative, to middle-of-the-road, to somewhat liberal. What they have in common is their desire to serve Jesus in the diocese they have always known and loved.

What my bishop-colleagues and I have promised to them is to support them in any way we can as they reorganize, to be physically present at their meetings when that is desired, and to call our dioceses to prayerful and practical support of them as they rebuild a diocesan structure and elect a bishop. I ask that you remember them each day as you pray.

Furthermore, as a general thing, the other bishops in Pennsylvania will try to be present at each other's conventions, have our staffs meet annually, and seek other ways to work together. The rift we have experienced in Pittsburgh was made possible because one leadership was allowed to balkanize a diocese, and we who remain are determined to stay connected to each other and to the national body. We believe that the family that stays together has at least a chance of praying together.

#### (II) Communication, Planned Giving, Youth

Looking much more locally, there are some internal matters I believe I should highlight.

(A) The matter of communication that underlies what I have just said about the other dioceses in Pennsylvania is an important one. The first step in isolating Pittsburgh's people and parishes some dozen years ago was leadership's decision to cut off communication with the larger church and cease to distribute its publications, primarily *Episcopal Life*. We try to do just the opposite, hoping that fully informed people will make fully informed decisions. You know me

well enough to know that I don't agree with everything said in our national publications and do not cringe at every word that comes from Canterbury, but I hope you also know that I believe that the conversation with those who differ from us is worth it. Our diocese has for years been considered a leader in communication-as-community, balancing print and electronic channels creatively and effectively, and we are in Bill Lewellis's debt for that.

Nonetheless, people sometimes tell me that they wonder where to find out where the next training for children's ministry or stewardship is, or when the bishop is next coming to their church. Well, they can get that information easily. For several years now, Bill Lewellis has been publishing a weekly update of facts, resources, important statements, and so on. *newSpin* is an electronic newsletter of information related to the Diocese of Bethlehem, the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion. Get the news online, weekly — with some spin, of course, from the editor. Give your email address to Bill Lewellis or Kat Lehman. Ask for *newSpin*.

Beyond *newSpin*, just browsing over to [DioBeth.org](http://DioBeth.org) will get you a host of information and resources, opinion, schedules, and links to the wider church.

(B) We are all aware that financial news is the big news right now. An increasing number of parishes are taking a constructive approach to our uncertain economic times by focusing on the importance of building their endowments. We all know that the income from endowments can supply and strengthen parish ministry, especially when times are challenging. Therefore some parishes without endowments are working to develop them, and others are raising awareness in their congregations about the simple ways that all of us can include a gift to our churches in our estate plans. The sole reason that the St. Matthew Society exists is to encourage and thank all those who take these very important steps for the future of this church. There has never been a better time to initiate a gift-planning program in your parish, and Char Horst is ready and able to help you with resources and guidance along the way.

(C) Then a word about our young people, whose programs are becoming more creative each year. Two busloads of youth went on a trek with me to Night Watch at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York, and we will make a similar trip again this winter.

Our young people packaged 50,000, yes, 50,000 meals for Stop Hunger Now at Christophany. They also did a "water walk" to raise awareness of the five miles an average African (Cont. on page A3)

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(Cont. from page A2) must walk each day to get clean water—and to help fulfill their pledge to New Hope.

We had a successful first-ever Junior High mission trip to work in the northern tier of the diocese, and had a full delegation at the Episcopal youth Event in Texas.

Beyond all of this, I am struck by the fact that the Happening program for high-school youth has been going on now for 18 years, and is sold out again this year. We have an entire generation that has been marked by this experience of renewal and fellowship, and for this I am profoundly grateful.

(D) Finally, while I am being grateful, I need to acknowledge the hundreds of expressions of sympathy and support my family and I have received at the death of my father in late August. Those of you who have lost a parent know that the feelings that cluster around such a death do not process themselves smoothly or in a straight line. There are still moments that are quite intense and surprising, and at those times it is very valuable to know that one is not alone.

### (III) Loving neighbor in bad times

Well, what about our own money, given what has happened to markets globally? First, to those of you retired clergy and laity who rely on the Church Pension Fund for a monthly check, I have been asked to say that the Fund is and has always been prepared for the kind of setback we are seeing, and that pensions are secure. What might have looked like over-funding has turned out to be prudent planning.

Secondly, while the market has slumped to the degree it has across the board, the Diocesan Investment Trust is in much better shape than that, and the Trustees are monitoring the market carefully. Times like the ones we are experiencing also provide unique investment opportunities, and the fund managers are well aware of this.

I think it is obvious that as individuals and groups we are going to have to be careful with our money. More importantly, all of us who have jobs and who retain some assets must be more acutely aware than ever of those in our communities who face a period of need. It is likely that the invisible white-collar poverty we saw in the 80s will reappear: Ask your children to be aware of who doesn't have lunch at school. You might want to equip them to gently share. I am grateful that Redeemer, Sayre, for instance, is one of the churches that works hard to help needy people heat their homes in the winter. I am grateful that Christ Church in Reading puts food in the mouths of hungry children, even on Sundays. There are similar ministries all around the diocese, and we will need more of those ministries this year.

### (IV) William Augustus Muhlenberg

Speaking of Reading: One of the few famous clergymen of the early Episcopal Church to have ever visited Reading, Pennsylvania, where we meet today, was William Augustus Muhlenberg, a member of one of Pennsylvania's most aristocratic families. When he was a small child, his mother sent him to the Episcopal Church because Philadelphia Lutherans were not yet ready to speak English in worship. Young William fell

in love with his new church, in which he was eventually ordained. From Philadelphia he moved to Lancaster and became rector of St. James; while rector he started Lancaster's public school system and simultaneously brought out our first full-blown hymnals, neither effort being without opposition. He moved on to start schools and hospitals in New York, and founded the first Episcopal parish that did not rent its pews. After the Civil War he began an industrial community for war widows and orphans on Long Island. He was a prolific hymn-writer and liturgical reformer whose work has affected our present prayer book, and the same St. Luke's Hospital that he founded in New York City remains a leading health care center in our nation. He also started New York's Easter Parade as his parishioners carried flowers to the hospital he founded.

But what I want to point out is that although Muhlenberg was born in 1796, he so thoroughly believed in the separation of secular and religious matters that in his position as a priest he never voted. That is, he did not exercise his right to vote until 1860, even though he had a long personal connection with President James Buchanan and was related to important political figures.

Muhlenberg explained his 1860 change of heart about being actively concerned for the political order by saying that the preservation of the Union and the question of slavery were both too important to allow him to continue sitting out our national life in priestly detachment. His devotion to Abraham Lincoln was that of a soul resonating with soul, and he even wrote a hymn for the president. So, Muhlenberg concluded, there finally comes a time when even clergy must stand for something in the civil order, the place where decisions are made. His decision to defend the Union and the abolition of slavery cost him considerably—New York was the site of considerable violence by certain Irish immigrants who did not wish to see slaves freed and competing with them for jobs, and Muhlenberg was in physical danger more than once. But he took a stand, even as an old man.

But for an Episcopalian, this taking of stands was not an unusual or new thing. In Pennsylvania, our church was disproportionately represented in the great act of rebellion that gave us our national existence, and the first public body to take notice of the Declaration of Independence was the vestry of Christ Church, Philadelphia. Until the 1982 hymnal arrived we sang a hymn written in protest against the war with Mexico in 1846. It began, "Once to every man and nation, comes the moment to decide." It was extracted from a poem by a lawyer-poet, James Russell Lowell, who knew a moral imperative when he saw one, entitling his work, *The Present Crisis*. The somewhat difficult text is about the importance of embracing virtue before it becomes popular. For example: It is quite a different thing to be in favor of women's right to vote today than it was in 1908. Please sing it with me.

Once to every man and nation,  
Comes the moment to decide,  
In the strife of truth with falsehood,  
For the good or evil side;

Some great cause, God's new Messiah,  
Offering each the bloom or blight,  
And the choice goes by forever,  
'Twill that darkness and that light.

Then to side with truth is noble,  
When we share her wretched crust,  
Ere her cause bring fame and profit,  
And 'tis prosperous to be just;  
Then it is the brave man chooses  
While the coward stands aside,  
Till the multitude make virtue  
Of the faith they had denied.

By the light of burning martyrs,  
Jesus' bleeding feet I track,  
Toiling up new Calvaries ever  
With the cross that turns not back;  
New occasions teach new duties,  
Time makes ancient good uncouth;  
They must upward still and onward,  
Who would keep abreast of truth.

Though the cause of evil prosper,  
Yet 'tis truth alone is strong;  
Though her portion be the scaffold,  
And upon the throne be wrong;  
Yet that scaffold sways the future,  
And, behind the dim unknown,  
Standeth God within the shadow,  
Keeping watch above his own.

Words: James Russell Lowell, 1845  
Music: *Ton-y-Botel* (Ebenezer)

### (V) Comes a moment to decide

*Comes a moment to decide.* I believe that at no time since the civil rights era are there such important choices in front of the American Christians, and some of them are not popular. Unlike some religious leaders, I do not believe that it is the job of your bishop to tell you how to vote, and I disagree that the presidential election is, as a Roman Catholic bishop put it in a widely-publicized homily, about "one issue," that of abortion. The Episcopal Church decades ago made it clear that we do not consider abortion an acceptable means of birth control, and we mean it. However, from our point of view, there are many issues, not one issue, before voters this year.

It is a no-brainer that Christians have an obligation to love their neighbor. When we talk about how to love more than one neighbor at a time, however, we are engaging the world of the political, not the partisan, but the political.

Thus I do join other bishops in believing that very serious choices indeed lie before us in the next month, and while I do not presume to instruct anyone's consciences I do invite you as I have never done before in the 14 conventions we have had together, to use those consciences. Let me put some questions as sharply as I can.

First, we must decide as a nation whether we shall continue the now decades-old policy of privatizing profits while socializing losses.

Then, we must decide whether we shall continue to be the only industrialized country on the planet where health care is not available to all citizens. For 50 years we have been a signatory to the UN Declaration of Human Rights, but we pretend that we are not when it comes to its statements about health care. In this regard, somebody must decide whether my local

hospital, for just one instance that has gotten a lot of newspaper attention, can continue to shield hundreds of millions of dollars of excess income under its non-profit status, while an uninsured poor person walking into its emergency room is charged thousands of dollars for an x-ray and a few stitches—the same treatment your insurance company pays a couple of hundred dollars for when your child falls off her bike. The entire structure of health care needs to come under the lens.

We have got to give a clear message that the American electorate finds its intelligence insulted and its core values dishonored by state and national political campaigns that are organized around fear mongering, half-truths, and gross distortions.

We must decide whether decades of de-regulation and following the path of trickle-down economics has helped you, your neighbors, or, especially, the "stranger at your gates." Maybe it has, but let's talk about it, because I don't think it has. For just one example: many couples work two jobs to live almost but not quite as well as their parents did on one income. Is there something wrong with that picture? It is an inconvenient question on several grounds, but if you are interested in how children are raised it is an important question.

The man I told you about in my last convention address, a man who was at the time living under a bridge, was ultimately given a home, in very small part because of those remarks. This week I became aware of a double amputee who is homeless because his mental illness is unacceptable to the local housing authority in my town. They don't accept reapplications for people they evict for five years. My man will surely be dead of exposure or violence by the time he qualifies to reapply. Our only recourse is to attempt an involuntary committal, and that is never an easy thing or a sure or lasting thing.

He is homeless, severely mentally ill, and bound to a wheelchair. This is not a case made up for an infomercial: I know this man. He exists. Think about that for a moment and imagine that he is your son or brother. This kind of thing, I am learning far too late in life, happens all the time in my country today, and has happened since we emptied the mental hospitals and allowed ourselves to believe that the expression "managed care" is not an oxymoron. This is not the country—or the commonwealth—that I believe in. It is not what the founders of either our country or our religion envisioned. It is certainly not what the Baptismal Covenant means by "respecting the dignity of every human being."

I invite those of you who think that I am over-dramatizing the situation to volunteer some time at a social service agency run by one of our parishes, or to visit the schools in downtown Reading where attendance drops in winters because it isn't the turn of some children in the family to wear the one coat their mother can afford. Visit one of our churches in that rural town with the lowest high school completion rate in the state, or the one in the county with the highest incest rate in the state and talk to the clergy about life there. Those record-holding (Cont. on page A6)



## In-Formation in Bethlehem

# Many things form our lives



BY THE REV. CANON ANNE E. KITCH

Many things form and shape our lives. The people we know. The spaces we inhabit. The interests we pursue. We are constantly being formed, informed and reformed. Even as children, we never start as blank slates. We enter the world with emotional and physical and spiritual demands and reactions. We begin to know and be formed by our world from the moment we take our first breath. Children do not stand idle, waiting for someone to give them information and instruction so that they can begin to understand themselves and their surroundings. Nor is there a moment when we are complete as adults, when we are finished being formed. All our lives are spent in the process of growing up.

This is true also of our faith lives. In our baptismal rite, parents who bring their children to the waters are first asked to promise that they will by their "prayers and witness help this child to grow into the full stature of Christ." What an audacious promise! Who could possibly keep it? Just what is the full stature of Christ? We can think of physical stature as our full height. At some point in our lives, we mature physically and stop getting taller. We have reached our full stature. But full stature in Christ? Just what would that look like? Perhaps it would be when one becomes fully the human being that

God created her or him to be. When we reach our full capacity to love and be loved. Thus faith formation is a life-long process. Our need for spiritual nurture does not end with our graduation from Sunday school, or our confirmation, or our election to the vestry. In fact, these life transitions merely mark the points in which deepening our spiritual intake is a good thing.

Faith formation is about how we get to know God. It is about the effect our relationship with God has on our daily lives. No relationship stays static over the years. Friends grow closer and farther apart. Spouses enter more deeply into the complexities of partnerships. Parents watch their children grow. God calls us into relationship. God does not just give marching orders. God feeds us. God forgives us. God calls us to ministry. God yearns for our love and worship. God loves us and love... is relational. As the writer of the First Letter of John claims, "We love because he first loved us." (1 John 4:19)

Education is one component of formation. It is important to understand things about our faith and about our tradition. We can study the bible. We can learn church history. We can memorize prayers and hymns. All of these things inform us... and form us. It is good to know about God, because it helps us to better know God.

We are formed by prayer and other spiritual practices. This is the beauty of our Episcopal worship. It is all about formation. Our faith life is profoundly affected by ritual. In the Episcopal Church we do ritual well. Our worship engages the senses. On Sunday morning we see and hear and smell and touch and taste. Vestments and stained-glass windows. Music and readings. Incense and flowers and wood polish. Well worn cushions and handshakes. Bread and wine. We stand, sing, kneel, approach the holy, go out into the world. When we repeat these motions and experiences

week after week, we are shaped and formed by them and the deep mysteries they point toward.

We are formed by the relationships around us. If we are welcomed and made comfortable by our friends, we experience deep hospitality and learn to welcome others. If in our households we are loved and respected, kept warm and fed, we will come to know that we are worthy of such nurture and we will be able to nurture others. If within our communities we belong to groups that work for justice, make good stewardship choices, and value the lives of others, we are better able to make such choices for ourselves.

This is why the writer of 1 John also says, "Beloved, since God loved us so

much, we ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us." (1 John 4:11-12) This would be the full stature of Christ — that God's love would be perfected in us.

We can make some choices about what forms us. Certainly, much of life and what we experience is beyond our control. But we can exercise discipline about the choices we make and how we process life events. We can educate ourselves about our faith and tradition. We can enliven our lives with prayer and worship. We can choose relationships that feed our souls. As faith formation is a life-long process, each moment offers a time to engage our spiritual lives anew.

### Resources for Adult Formation

- *The Desert Mothers: Spiritual Practices from the Women of the Wilderness*, Mary Earl, [churchpublishing.org](http://churchpublishing.org) (Each chapter of this book explores a spiritual practice)
- *The Rule of Benedict: Insight for the Ages*, Joan Chittister, [amazon.com](http://amazon.com) (Daily readings from the rule for living that St. Benedict wrote in the early sixth century, with meditations about our modern life)
- [teforall.org](http://teforall.org) (Theological education resources for Episcopalians, including Advent resources)
- [missionstclare.com](http://missionstclare.com) (Presents services of Morning and Evening Prayer, Noonday Prayer, Compline, and Devotions for Individuals and Families)

### Online Prayer Resources

- ✦ **Explore Faith** [www.explorefaith.com](http://www.explorefaith.com) provides numerous resources for prayer and exploring faith, spirituality and God.
- ✦ **Gratefulness** [www.gratefulness.org](http://www.gratefulness.org) is dedicated to supporting a life of gratitude. Visitors can send e-cards and sign up to receive a word for the day.
- ✦ **Online labyrinth** [www.labyrinth.org.uk](http://www.labyrinth.org.uk). This contemporary labyrinth includes music, meditations, art, media and symbolic activities at intervals along the way.
- ✦ **Oremus** [www.oremus.org](http://www.oremus.org) Daily prayer, liturgy, hymns and prayer resources. Includes calendar of saints, lectionary, searchable Bible, and prayer requests.
- ✦ **Contemplative Prayer Chapel** [www.contemplativeprayer.net/chapelPray.html](http://www.contemplativeprayer.net/chapelPray.html). A 20-minute audio for the practice of contemplative prayer. Audio helps you begin to relax and continues with timed silence for 20 minutes. Silence is broken with the Lord's Prayer.
- ✦ **Daily Lectionary** [www.dailylectionary.org](http://www.dailylectionary.org). Sign up to have the daily lectionary sent to your e-mail.
- ✦ **Sacred Space** [www.sacredspace.ie](http://www.sacredspace.ie). Daily prayer reflections in variety of languages. Produced by the Irish Jesuits.

(Address to Convention 2008 continued from page A3) places are both in our diocese. There is a level of misery around us that most of us understandably would prefer not to see, and are certainly not shown. But it is there, and as a people we need to respond. While my mentally ill man in a wheel chair gets ready to freeze under a bridge in Bethlehem, at that time in the voting booth you and I must as we vote weigh the morality of permitting huge golden parachutes for those who preside over financial disasters. These current perks far overshadow both the extent of the disaster and the size of the parachutes that went unchallenged in the demise of some of the heavy industry in our own region while working people lost everything. Executive compensation in this country has no relationship to reality, and would be unthinkable in highly productive countries in Asia. Is there no limit, no accountability in a culture of greed? That the current financial crisis provides cover for so many scoundrels is a matter of deep shame.

There needs to be limit and accountability because the world has changed. The flutter of the wings of a butterfly in India is said to lead to hurricanes in Honduras. We cannot afford the myth that we can do our own thing in our comfortable communities with no regard to wider implications for our fellow humans. That is true economically, spiritually, and ecologically. The truth I bow to here means that each of our brains must stretch from what is comfortable to trying to seek what is just, useful, and most fruitful in our time. "New occasions teach new duties. Time makes ancient good uncouth," goes the hymn I mentioned. The present crisis reminds us that the intellectual and spiritual dimensions of citizenship are much, much broader than many of us were taught to believe in the last millennium.

You may be worried about your investments today. I certainly am concerned about mine. There are much larger questions, however, about our

social order and our grandchildren's future, and they are first-order questions that must be addressed. Economists, like members of every academic guild, deal in competing orthodoxies, and our leadership must know how to listen and discern as various wizards offer their solutions. We must elect leadership we believe able to understand the options and look at the long term.

So far, so good. Both John McCain and Barack Obama seem to agree that the issues I mention are important, each with his own set of solutions, of course. Deep change has to happen, and Republicans and Democrats both acknowledge it. The question to us the electorate will be how change is to occur.

As a human being who attempts to follow Jesus and has the job of working with others as they do so too, I ask that you become as informed as you can about the implications of what each candidate offers to do if he is given the chance to lead this nation. I ask that you both believe in your hearts and express by your actions that informed citizenship is

a religious duty in a democracy. I applaud both candidates for their courage in admitting that there is no quick fix for our problems. The slow fix takes thought, however. I have said many times that there is a religious duty to read a good newspaper, and I emphasize that now with all my heart and ask that reading be accompanied by deep prayer. The best national and international newspapers are, fortunately, online and may be read at no charge.

To sum this section up: I ask you to believe that for Christians there are many issues, never just one issue, and I have tried to make that point by highlighting just a few of the many moral issues we must engage if we are to strive to love the neighbor in a democracy where the people hold the power. Complex thinking, praying, and acting are our duty. Let's be sure that we treasure all Episcopalians' right to think for themselves—but let us insist that they think. I believe that the action that follows such thinking will please God and serve creation.