



DIOCESAN DIGEST

for Central Pennsylvania

April 24, 2009

FROM THE DESK OF.....

BISHOP NATHAN BAXTER

I want to share with our Diocese my decision not to give my consent to the election and consecration of the bishop-elect of Northern Michigan. The Standing Committee, after much consideration, has voted in the majority to give its consent, and I do respect their decision..

My principal reasons for withholding consent have to do with what I feel is needed to be a bishop for the whole Church, in serving both as a symbol of unity and a model of theological clarity about the fundamental faith or core doctrine of the Church. Having read the Bishop-elect's sermons and his letters of explanation regarding regular use of liturgical innovations, I am further concerned that he does not model appropriately for the Church, especially at this time of strains within the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion.

I have no concern that the bishop-elect is a good person and, as a priest, may have served meaningfully in the culture and values of his diocese, including the pioneering work of Total Ministry in Northern Michigan. However, the liturgies of the Book of Common Prayer, particularly the Eucharist and Baptismal liturgies, represent not just approved ceremonies, but the core theology and Christology of the Episcopal Church. That his spiritual practice includes Zen Buddhist meditation may not be a matter of major doctrinal concern; except that, even as he explains its modesty of importance (i.e. not an ordination), a ceremony of inclusion in a Buddhist community is not a helpful model of essential commitment to Jesus Christ. My greatest concern is that his sense or understanding of the trinity lacks an appreciation of the essential atoning and incarnate role of Jesus. Salvation seems more about self-enlightenment and a resulting union with God. Our liturgies are consistent and clear about the core doctrinal understanding of sin, atonement, and the centrality of Jesus in the salvation act of God.

I have personally hosted the Dali Lama and other Buddhist leaders on many occasions. I have a great respect and affection, especially for the Dali Lama, regarding spiritual integrity, moral philosophies and openness to interfaith sharing. And like yoga, Buddhist spiritual exercises can be easily adaptable to Christian practice and entered into without theological intent. However, there are clear distinctions between Buddhist a-theistic philosophy as a path to salvation and the Christian understanding and commitment to a Christ-centered path to salvation. The Bishop-elect's adaptations of liturgies, hermeneutical and

theological interpretations, as I have read them, do not make a clear commitment to the core doctrines and liturgical discipline of the Episcopal Church as broadly expressed in the Book of Common Prayer.

I hasten to say that I do not question either his journey, nor the respect that many have for him and his ministry, nor that he wishes to be a part of the Episcopal Church. Many notable clergy and lay leaders have been creatively eclectic in their spirituality, and theologically experimental in their liturgical expressions. In some examples, their experiences have proven inspirational for others in the Church. Other times it leads to a kind of religious Gnosticism or liturgical individualism. Exactly where that line may be is a matter between those persons and their pastoral or spiritual overseers. (Thomas Merton, the most notable example offered in support of the Bishop-Elect, encountered such a call to accountability in the core values of his community. He did reluctantly submit to the discipline of his order when it was felt that his sincere experiments were distracting from the community's core commitments. He writes about the difficulty and ultimate benefit he found in such submission.) However, my essential concern is for the lack of demonstrated commitment necessary for one to be a clear symbol of unity and a guardian of the core doctrine and discipline of the whole Church. What ever liberties may be afforded in other orders of ministry, these are among the most unique expressions of a bishop's vows, ministry and vocation.

One of the core qualities of Anglicanism is its ability to endure tensions. While I am sure that some of my colleagues in the House of Bishops will differ with me, I hope this note will help clarify the reasoning behind my decision to withhold my consent.

Peace & Grace
+Nathan

SPRING CONVOCATION MEETINGS

April 23 - 7pm Lancaster Convocation St. Edward's, Lancaster	May 13 - 7pm Altoona Convocation St. Luke's, Altoona
April 29 - 7pm Southern Convocation St. Mary's, Waynesboro	May 14 - 6:30pm Susquehanna Convocation St. Matthew's, Sunbury
May 12 - 6pm West Branch Convocation Christ Church, Williamsport (6pm dinner, 7pm meeting)	May 28 - 7pm Northern Tier Convocation St. Paul's, Wellsboro

MAILING ADDRESS

PO Box 11937
Harrisburg, PA 17108

DIOCESAN CENTER

101 Pine Street
Harrisburg, PA

TELEPHONE

(717) 236-5959

FAX

(717) 236-6448

TOLL FREE IN

STATE OF PA

1-888-236-5959

WEBSITE

www.diocesecpa.org

EMAIL

officemailbox@diocesecpa.org

REMEMBER IN YOUR PRAYERS...

Donna Wolfe, who worked in the parish offices at Church of the Transfiguration, Blue Ridge Summit, and St. Mary's Waynesboro, died last Friday, April 17th after a long battle with cancer. Please pray for her husband, Leon, and their family during the days ahead.

The Rt. Rev. Roger Bird, Bishop of Sao Paulo is undergoing treatment for ulcers.

The Rev. Leslie Doyle, as she deals with continuing serious medical challenges related to her cancer.

The Rev. Cn. Robert Pursel, Rector of All Saints, Selinsgrove, as he continues with tests and treatment.

Linda Seville, wife of Canon Joe Seville, as she continues cancer treatments.

Louise Van Deusen, the mother of Father Bob Van Deusen suffered a stroke on April 11th. She has been discharged from hospital and is in the skilled nursing unit at Nottingham Village, Northumberland.

PRESIDING BISHOP VISIT

The Most Rev. Dr. Katharine Jefferts Schori, Presiding Bishop of The Episcopal Church, will visit the Diocese of Central Pennsylvania September 12th and 13th. She will preach and celebrate Eucharist at Trinity Lutheran Church, Camp Hill, at 10:30am on the 12th. We are using Trinity Lutheran because it is the largest church in the area.



Since the Presiding Bishop will not be able to tour each parish, we want the parishes to come to the Presiding Bishop. We propose to have participating parishes set up a display to show the PB what your parish is doing. In order to make plans for the displays we need to know how many parishes will need display space. If your parish would like to demonstrate your programs to the PB, contact Mike Cross by August 31st at mccross7564@aol.com to reserve your space.

ANTI-RACISM TRAINING FOR HARRISBURG CONVOCATION

Saturday May 2, 2009, 8:00am-4:00pm
(registration begins at 7:30am)

St. Paul's Church
248 Seneca St., Harrisburg
717-233-2175

For Lay and Ordained parish leadership
Cost: \$10 each, includes lunch

UPCOMING EVENTS...April-June

- Apr 25** ECW Annual meeting, St. Stephen's Cathedral, Harrisburg. The Rev. Mpho Tutu keynote speaker (see p. 2)
Apr 25 9am-12pm Lay Eucharistic Training at St. Andrew's in the Valley, Harrisburg
Apr 25 10am-1:30pm Planning meeting for Youth Pilgrimage/ Mission to Casa Dia at St. Andrew's, Lewisburg (see p. 2)
Apr 26 Bishop visits St. Thomas Lancaster
Apr 26-28 Bishop, Cn Seville and delgation at Province III Synod, Martinsburg, WV
Apr 29 Southern Convocation mtg, St. Mary's Waynesboro
Apr 30 Bishop at opening dinner of B+E+S+T (bishops' secretaries' association) conference, Washington DC
May 2 8am-4pm Anti-Racism Commission Training, St. Paul's, Harrisburg (see p. 2 for details)
May 3 Bishop visits St. John's, Carlisle
May 12 West Branch Convocation 6pm dinner, 7pm dinner, Christ Church, Williamsport
May 13 10am-3pm Bishop to give welcome & invocation at Volunteer Organizations Active in Disasters (VOAD) meeting, St. Andrew's in the Valley, Harrisburg
May 13 7pm Altoona Convocation mtg St. Luke's, Altoona
May 14 6:30pm Susquehanna Convocation meeting, St. Matthew's, Sunbury
May 17 Bishop visits St. John's, Lancaster
May 18-21 Bishop at College for Bishops Living our Vows residency program at Kanuga Conference Ctr
May 20 6:30pm HIV/AIDS Commission mtg Nativity, Newport
May 23 12Noon Memorial Day service - The Rt. Rev. George Packard preaching, Trinity, Williamsport
May 24 Bishop visits St. Matthew's, Sunbury
May 28 7pm Northern Tier Convocation meeting St. Paul's, Wellsboro
May 30 & 31 Bishop visits St. James, Lancaster
June 7 Bishop visits St. Paul's, Columbia
June 12-13 Diocesan Convention, Bucknell, Lewisburg
June 14 Bishop visits All Saints, Selinsgrove
June 15 Diocesan Office closed
June 22 Bishop's Open golf tournament (details to follow)
June 28 Bishop visits St. James Muncy & Exchange

If you have an event of interest to the diocese that you would like to have listed on the Diocesan website calendar, please contact Deacon Pat Strohl at pstrohl@diocesecpa.org or 888-236-5959

A NOTE OF THANKS

Dear Friends,

My recovery from the surgery for a rare brain condition continues. It seems it takes months rather than weeks for a complete recovery. I am improving daily though and am trying to be patient. When the Chiari symptoms do reappear, it scares us but Mayo reports that it is to be expected. Talk about learning to be patient.

Your prayers, concern, calls and cards have meant so much to us. Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!

Peace, Alice McNutt

If you have news or announcements of diocesan interest to include in the Diocesan Digest, please contact Carolyn Joy Patterson at cpatterson@diocesecpa.org