Diocesan Convention Report 2010

The 226th Annual Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of New Jersey was held March 5th and 6th in Cherry Hill, New Jersey. Trinity Red Bank was represented by Father Rodriguez, Timothy May, Emely Telford and Janet Pflederer. Thomas May also attended. The theme for this year was "Go forth for God" and the Diocese celebrated 225 years with a quilt of 160 blocks (one quilt for each convocation and a block for each parish). The convention covered the usual main agenda of committee reports, ballots for Diocesan elected offices and resolutions, as well as Bishop Councell's address and our keynote speaker, who this year was our Presiding Bishop, the Most Rev. Dr. Katharine Jefferts Schori.

This year the Bishop's address, the keynote speech, a list of people elected, and resolutions passed can all be found on our Diocesan website (whose URL is below). The focus of Bishop's Councell's address was the call to follow Jesus and to "get out of the boat" (referring to Peter in Mt 14:22-33), acknowledging that we are a Diocese in decline in a denomination in decline. He said that of the 110 dioceses in the Episcopal Church only four are growing, and none of them in our Province. (Our companion diocese, Ecuador Central, reports growing by 28.2%.) The Bishop's call is to mission, pointing to Calvary, and at times his voice was hoarse with the passion of his speech, which can be found in full at the URL below.

We heard from representatives from our companion diocese of Central Ecuador (including the bishop and his wife – the Rt. Rev. and Mrs. Luis Fernando Ruiz) who, among other things, mentioned the need for Bibles in the native Quichua language. Note that Thomas May has followed up with his colleagues at the American Bible Society; the latest "Scriptures of the World" shows two bibles in Quichua: Chimborazzo and Imbabura. He is looking for contacts in the Central Ecuador diocese to see if these languages are among those needed.

Since last year's convention, Holy Communion Fair Haven has closed and Christ's Church Magnolia and Christ's Church Collingswood have merged. (At last year's convention, Bishop Councell announced that roughly a third of the churches in this diocese need to consider selling buildings and / or consolidating with other churches.)

Speaking later in the day, the Bishop acknowledged that we are divided by sexuality. He stated that at General Convention 2009 he voted for both C056 and D025. He affirmed and supported these resolutions. (This generated a lot of applause.) He also stated that any can decline to celebrate **any** relationship and intends a generous pastoral response to everyone who did not clap for his previous statement.

Of the resolutions at our diocesan convention the one that generated the most discussion was Resolution 2010-3 in support of Mission Initiative. This resolution (in summary) would have taken income from diocesan property sales for the next ten years, invested the principle and applied the interest on the principle to support 10 new Hispanic missions and an equivalent number of non-Hispanic missions. It did not pass.

At the end of the day Friday, the Presiding Bishop gave her keynote address, starting by stating that Episcopal church is growing in a few places and declining in others and urging us to get out of our lovely church buildings to discover God already at work in the larger community. She said that building communities where young people can ask the really big questions is one of the most important kinds of evangelism we can do — and the other important kinds of evangelism are about building communities where others can do the same thing. The URL to her entire keynote speech is below. After the keynote speech was the Convention Eucharist with liturgy taken from the BCP, *The Wideness of God's Mercy* (compiled by Jeffery W. Rowthorn), and *Marking Time* (by Linda White Henke). The offering collected $6387 for Haiti.

On Saturday, voting and committee reports continued. One issue was the Diocesan budget. The presented budget did not include funding for an assisting bishop. After discussion and

consideration of some alternatives, an assisting bishop was funded and the allowance for Anticipated Shortfall in the Fair Share program increased by a corresponding amount.

Diocese of New Jersey website: http://www.newjersey.anglican.org/

URL to the Presiding Bishop's keynote speech:
http://www.newjersey.anglican.org/DiocesanConvention/2010/PBaddress.html

URL to Bishop Councell's address:
http://www.newjersey.anglican.org/DiocesanConvention/2010/BpCouncellAddress.html