

Sisters and brothers in Christ,

Good evening. It is wonderful to be gathered together on the campus of Bowling Green State University for our 200th Diocesan Convention. I thank you and I thank God for your presence and commitment to our shared vocation as servants of God's mission in our congregations and Mission Areas, as The Diocese of Ohio and The Episcopal Church, and with our sibling provinces of the Anglican Communion around the world. Your companionship is a continued blessing and your fidelity to the church is an inspiration.

As we begin the Diocese of Ohio's bicentennial year, we are privileged and grateful to have with us Mrs. Alison Chillingworth and the Most Rev. David Chillingworth, Bishop of St. Andrews, Dunkeld and Dunblane, and Primus of the Scottish Episcopal Church. While my friendship with the Chillingworths is fairly recent, facilitated by having two of our children go to college in their diocese, my sense of relationship feels long and deep.

As was commemorated in our worship this evening, the first Bishop of The Episcopal Church, Samuel Seabury, was ordained to the episcopacy in Aberdeen on November 14, 1784. English bishops were unable to ordain anyone who could not swear allegiance to the crown, but bishops of the Scottish church were not so constrained, as a result of their predecessors' break from William and Mary following the deposition of James II. Because Seabury's ordaining bishops were the Bishop and Bishop Coadjutor of Aberdeen and the Bishop of Ross and Caithness, the apostolic succession of bishops in the America church was established. As part of this early companionship between our two churches, The Episcopal Church modeled its Eucharistic Prayer on that of the Scottish Episcopal Church, which continues to inform our Eucharistic worship to this day.

Our two provinces have been companions as well in responding to social issues in our respective ministry contexts, facing many of the same difficult challenges both within our individual ecclesial structures and in relationship with other provinces of the Anglican Communion. These common struggles that have shaped us as contemporary Christians have also deepened the bonds of affection that were forged more than two and a quarter centuries ago. Bishop Chillingworth and our own President of the House of Deputies, Gay Jennings, have served together on the Anglican Consultative Council, one of the "instruments of unity" of the Anglican Communion, which has provided them with a warm collegial relationship and affection. We will all join with them tomorrow morning for a plenary discussion with Convention delegates about the role of Episcopal churches like ours in meeting the particular challenges of our time.

Alison and David, thank you for going to the extreme effort of traveling to be with us at this important moment in the life of our diocese. We are very grateful. As an expression of that gratitude and affection, I have a couple of gifts I'd like to present to you. (Honey from Bellwether Farm; Sailor's Cross scarf and necktie.)

The 200th anniversary of the Diocese is, by the standards of our church and country's history, a significant mark. As the first diocese of The Episcopal Church established beyond the thirteen colonies, the Diocese of Ohio was at the forefront of the growth of our church. Following the early settlers who traveled west, principally from Connecticut, Jackson Kemper, Joseph

Doddridge, Roger Searle, and Philander Chase were among those itinerant clergy who came to Ohio in its first two decades, assisting congregations of faithful Christians in forming parishes that together would become, in 1817, the Episcopal Diocese of Ohio. Some of you here tonight represent those first Episcopal parishes established before there was a diocese – St. James Boardman, St. Peter’s Ashtabula, St. Paul’s Medina (originally in Weymouth), and Trinity Cleveland.

From those hardscrabble beginnings, the Diocese of Ohio, like the State of Ohio, has offered exceptional leadership to the broader community, the country, and the world. Philander Chase, the first Episcopal priest to establish residency in Ohio, became the first Bishop of the Diocese (18th Bishop in the American succession) and the Sixth Presiding Bishop. Countless lay and clergy leaders have followed him and his early companions in serving the church and society with dedication and devotion. Today, the leadership generosity of this diocese continues. It is important for you to know that on committees, commissions, agencies, and boards of The Episcopal Church, a considerable number of your colleagues currently serve. Dianne Smith and Bishop Williams serve on the Committee to Study the Relationship of The General Theological Seminary and the General Convention, Bishop Williams being the Chair. Dianne also serves as Secretary of the National Union of Black Episcopalians. Steven Plank and Chris Decatur serve on the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music. Jim Simon serves on the Standing Commission on Structure, Governance, Constitution and Canons. Charlotte Reid, Mary Carson, and I serve as Trustees of the Bexley Seabury Seminary Federation. Meghan Froehlich serves as Missioner for Transition Ministry on The Episcopal Church Staff. Eric Funston serves on the Economic Justice Loan Committee of Executive Council. Dale Grandfield serves on The Episcopal Church and the Moravian Church Coordinating Committee. Jacob Bilich serves on the Joint Nominating Committee for the Election of a Presiding Bishop. Tracey Lind serves as a Trustee of the Church Pension Fund. Yoriki Encalada serves on the Task Force on Cuba. Eva Cole is a past President and current Board Member of BEST, the network of Bishops’ Executive Assistants (Bishops’ Executive Secretaries Together). Brad Purdom serves on the Task Force on Clergy Leadership in Small Congregations. Percy Grant writes curriculum for CREDO, and Sarah Shofstall, Betsey Bell, Elizabeth Moosbrugger, Amy Speidel, Sally Bear, Denny Anderson, Albert Jennngs, and Arthur Williams, serve on the CREDO Faculty. Brian Wilbert serves on the Board of Archives of The Episcopal Church. Aaron Gerlach serves on the Province V Executive Committee, of which I am the Vice-president. Bill Powel serves on the Special Commission on Impairment and Leadership, of which I am the Vice-Chair. I serve as the President of the Provincial House of Bishops in Province V, and as a member of the Presiding Bishop’s Council of Advice. Betsey Bell serves as Executive Assistant to the President of the House of Deputies, and of course, Gay Jennings is the President of the House of Deputies. Please forgive me if I have neglected to mention you or someone you know. Perhaps like the Mafia, it may be good to have a few who are unidentified.

This is no small number, especially for a diocese of this size. Leadership has always been a particular charism of this diocese, and as we look toward the new century that awaits the church in Ohio, we must each open our eyes and hearts to the leadership roles God is offering. Our prayers must invite a sensitivity and vulnerability to the movement of the Spirit, asking God to challenge us to be leaders in new and transformative ways, in parochial, diocesan, denominational, and community contexts.

We don't have to look back 200 years for inspiring models, either. Doubtless, you have examples who sit near you in the pews on Sunday. Perhaps one is sitting with you tonight. One of mine is the Diocesan Treasurer, Tom Austin. He pretends to have been around at the founding of the Diocese, but he hasn't even been alive half that long. In fact, last month he only celebrated his 90th birthday. Tom, will you please come up here so we can sing to you now. (Happy birthday...)

Tom and Ann moved here in 1975 from greater Detroit. To give you some perspective, that was two years before Arthur Williams did the same. Having served in parish and diocesan positions in the Diocese of Michigan, Tom could easily have thought, "I've taken my turn, let's let someone else step up," but he did not. He offered his experience, commitment, and steady presence to both the Cathedral congregation and to the Diocese, and for more than four decades now, he has served the church in Ohio with great dedication.

When I came to this diocese, it was important to me that the officers of Convention, the Secretary and Treasurer, be communicants who were not employed on the Bishop's staff. I asked Tom if he would consider standing for the office of Treasurer, and after giving it some thought, he agreed. Thus, ten years ago, at the 190th Diocesan Convention, he was elected Treasurer of the Diocese and continues to serve with distinction. In that capacity he serves on Diocesan Council, Finance Committee, Audit Committee, Trustees, the Committee on Socially Responsible Investing, the Commission on Racial Understanding, and is an invaluable advisor to Sue Leishman and me. He is thoughtful, wise, perceptive, inquisitive, patient, and when necessary, definitive. His humility and disarming sense of humor invite collaboration, and he brings out the best in all who work with him. No matter what I take to him seeking his advice and direction, his highest priority is always the wellbeing of the Diocese of Ohio, its congregations, and those they serve. In short, Tom Austin is selfless in his servant leadership. He continually makes this a better church and me a better bishop. Tonight we mark the tenth anniversary of his election as Treasurer of the Diocese, and Tom, in recognition of your commitment as a Christian and your gifts as a leader, it gives me great pleasure to award you the Bishop's Medal.

The term "Christian leader" is redundant. To be a Christian is to lead – to lead toward justice, toward mercy, toward the reign of God. To be a Christian means to be a bellwether of the kingdom of heaven, a herald of the good news of God's love for all, showing the world where the greater good lies and how to get there. Together, we are building at Bellwether Farm a facility and ministry for a new century, providing a vehicle by which we can equip leaders for a sustainable future. This is a bold undertaking and models for the whole church a new approach to camp, retreat, and education ministry. Some of you may remember its beginnings in 2009 with the hard work of the Camp and Conference Ministry Study Committee chaired by Chet Bowling and including Kay Ashby, Tom Austin, Liddy Hoster, Keith Owen, Jim Rich, Dick Wilkison, Percy Grant, Danielle Weiser-Cline, and Ruth Morris. Seven years later, as we stand at the threshold of our Diocese's third century, their creative vision is becoming a reality. Those of you who were at last month's groundbreaking or have recently been by the site in Wakeman, will know that the property is being physically transformed. Old structures have been removed, new roads have been built, and the utilities infrastructure necessary to support new buildings and

programs is now in place. It is expected that foundations will soon be poured and new construction will begin. To date, this project has involved the participation of hundreds of volunteers working on design, program development, partnerships with other groups and institutions, fundraising, land management, farm strategies, and numerous other critical elements. Leading all of us in this complex undertaking is Katie Ong-Landini, our indefatigable Project Director for Camp and Retreat Ministry. Well suited to this task with her remarkable management skills and unflagging dedication, she is our own bellwether, pointing always to what God is imagining for our common ministry at this new facility and leading each of us to explore those roles in which our particular gifts and passions might make a worthy contribution.

Katie, will you please join me up here. I have a small gift for you that serves both as an expression of our continuing admiration and gratitude and as a symbol of your leadership.

Equipping leaders for a sustainable future is something we have been exploring this last year in particular regard to those preparing for Holy Orders. At the current time, we have ten seminarians preparing for the priesthood in five seminaries of The Episcopal Church. As well, we have five postulants in our diocesan Diaconal Formation Program. Of the ten discerning a priestly vocation, five are in traditional residential seminary programs, two are in post-seminary internships, and three are participating in a creative, new, low-residency Master of Divinity program that the Diocese of Ohio has developed in collaboration with the Bexley Seabury Seminary Federation.

With the support of the Commission on Ministry, the Standing Committee, the Diocesan Council, and the Bexley Seabury Board of Trustees, Percy Grant, Brad Purdom, and I have worked with the seminary's President and faculty to build a three-year course of study that incorporates Bexley Seabury and Chicago Theological Seminary's hybrid online and immersion M. Div. curriculum with a local "learning cohort" in which participating students meet weekly for formation and companionship. As well, we provide these seminarians with three-year, paid internships in parishes close to their homes. The internships integrate their studies with the practice of ministry, providing practical guidance while they develop pastoral, liturgical, and leadership skills. And, the congregations in which seminarian interns serve become learning communities themselves, benefitting from direct participation in the Christian education resources and online opportunities of the seminary.

While some students will continue to benefit from the traditional seminary experience, with this new model of theological training for priesthood we are able to provide locally an academically rigorous education, the formation opportunities found in residential seminaries, and the equivalent of a concurrent curacy with some of our own exceptional clergy and lay leaders. Two of our three Ohio/Bexley Seabury Low Residency M. Div. students are here at this Convention, Anna Risch and Steve Ashby. Please don't hesitate to speak with them about what they are doing. It should be noted that this and the curacy program in which Kelly Aughenbaugh is participating are supported by funds raised through the Bishop's Annual Appeal.

As we have for 200 years, the Diocese of Ohio is once again, by engaging its diocesan staff, parish clergy, and vital congregations, exercising a leadership role in addressing the future of the church's response to God's mission. In this partnership, we and the Bexley Seabury Seminary Federation are modeling a new and sustainable alternative for quality theological training and

formation for Holy Orders, meeting a number of the challenges and needs of our changing church. For the right students, it will make theological education accessible and will more deeply integrate the gifts and common mission of both the Seminary and the Diocese.

With this 200th Convention of the Diocese of Ohio, we begin our bicentennial year, the first such celebration for any diocese beyond the thirteen colonies. As I have written to you previously, this is an opportunity to take stock of whence we have come and what we have done over the last 200 years, in order to inform and direct our ministry as the body of Christ moving forward. The celebrations of the Church are always celebrations of what is yet to be. They point us always toward the future, toward what God is waiting to do with us. In the liturgies for baptism, confirmation, ordination, and matrimony, and whenever we renew our baptismal covenant, we are always asked, “Will you...” not “Have you...?” And so in this bicentennial year, we ask ourselves and one another, “What will we do?” “What does God need us to become?”

The Bicentennial Committee, chaired by Bishop Arthur and Lynnette Williams and the Reverends Gay and Albert Jennings, and supported by Diocesan Archivist Brian Wilbert and his staff colleagues Laura Hnat and Jessica Rocha, have created a number of vehicles by which to help us explore and answer these questions. They have already asked every parish to write and submit a bicentennial prayer, as we together beseech God to inspire us with a new urgency for God’s mission and a new clarity about our several and unique ways of living that out in the century to come. More than two-thirds of our parishes have already sent theirs in, and when the others arrive (submitted soon to Bill Powell!) they will be put into a booklet so that each of us, individually and collectively, can pray for the other throughout the coming year and beyond.

Tomorrow afternoon we will commission Bicentennial Missioners, appointed in every parish, to facilitate congregational efforts to capture a vision of a future we can all share, one built upon the ministries of every congregation and communicant. They will help each of us imagine “What is your 200?” as a way of identifying new or increased disciplines of prayer, service, giving, advocating, and inviting. For some it might be increasing to 200% their current average Sunday attendance by improving the attendance of current communicants and inviting others to come to church with them. For a youth group it might be 200 hours of raking leaves for seniors in their community. For a feeding program it might be serving another 200 meals per day or week or month. For a parish it might be 200 communicant visits to the Cathedral over the course of the year, as it celebrates its 200th anniversary as a congregation. Its bicentennial exhibition on display in the Gallery at Trinity Commons is worth the trip alone. For a Mission Area or the Diocese as a collective body it might be 200 trees for Bellwether Farm, or 200 chickens, or 200 volunteer hours building a barn or cabin. For families it might be reading 200 scripture passages during this year and talking about what they mean to each person. For an individual it might be developing and keeping current a list of 200 things for which to pray. For each of us it might be telling 200 people why church is important to us and offering to pick them up on Sunday!

The first Episcopal cleric to minister regularly in Ohio was the Rev. Joseph Doddridge of Pennsylvania, who began providing worship services in Steubenville in the 1790’s. Among his many accomplishments was a book he published in 1813 entitled *A Treatise on the Culture of Bees*. Most of you will not be surprised to know how much that pleases me. St. John Chrysostom wrote, “The bee is more honored than other animals, not because she labors, but because she

labors for others.” One of the many fascinating things that worker bees do when they return to the hive laden with pollen is communicate with the other bees to indicate the location of the food source. They do what beekeepers call the “waggle dance.” The dance traces a small figure-eight, in which they waggle only during the middle section of the eight, and always in the same direction. The angle of that line in relation to the vertical perpendicular of the frame is the angle of flight in relation to the direction of the sun that the other bees must fly. You may find it interesting to learn that scientists refer to the waggle dance as “evangelization.” In sharing the good news about where the food source is, the bees are evangelizing. And the vitality of the hive depends upon it.

So it is with us. The vitality not only of our congregations but of our human society and our earthly habitat depends upon our sharing the good news about the source of spiritual, moral, and social nourishment with all. The children of God hunger deeply for this. Note that our central sacramental act is a meal. It is our vocation as the body of Christ to show the way, as did Christ Jesus who is the way, the truth, and the life. That is the purpose of evangelization, so that souls which hunger for justice, freedom, and hope might be fed by God’s love, the true bread of life.

Finally, we begin this bicentennial year in a time of great global unrest and national division. At the end of an historically hostile and divisive electoral season, one thing was certain, that whatever the outcome, half of the country would be profoundly disappointed and feel disenfranchised.

The greatest challenge of this election cycle lies before us. It is the hard work of reconciliation, reconciliation with some who may not be much interested in reconciling, and to whom we may not always much want to be reconciled. But that is what God expects of us. Before each of us in this country divided by fear and anger is the work of reclaiming our commitment to the other, our responsibility for the other, and our love of the other. That is our calling as disciples of Jesus. Every one of us is up to the task, not because of who we are, but because of who God is. The kingdom of heaven is always near; it is our responsibility to show the way.

Know that it remains a singular privilege to stand with you at the threshold of our third century as the Diocese of Ohio, opening our hearts and lives to all that God is calling us to be.

The Rt. Rev. Mark Hollingsworth, Jr.  
XI Bishop of Ohio