



The Right Reverend Andrew ML Dietsche
Bishop of New York
Address to the 242nd Convention of the
Episcopal Diocese of New York
November 10, 2018

Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is a joy to welcome you to this 242nd Convention of the Diocese of New York, my sixth as your bishop. As always, I am privileged to be joined at this Convention by my colleague bishops, Allen Shin and Mary Glasspool, both of whom you will hear from later today. It continues to be more than a joy to work together with them, and to do that work both in our shared desire to serve God in Christ as well as in the tremendous friendship we have for one another.

Recently I sent a letter to the clergy of the diocese, reminding them that priests and deacons are expected to attend Diocesan Convention, and that if they are unable to do so they need to tell me, and tell me why, and tell me where they are going to be instead. Later, I realized that I had made a significant omission in my note. I should have explicitly told retired clergy and clergy living thousands of miles away in other dioceses that this obligation did not extend to them. But over the time since I have received countless emails and notes from clergy who cannot be with us, and in so many of those notes I learned of personal matters and pastoral concerns, which in many cases the writer had not revealed to anyone else. I heard from clergy who I knew in New York but have moved far away, and it was wonderful to hear from them again. And many of them told me what it means for them to be connected to this diocese, and to be in fellowship with me as their bishop. It became such a privilege to read these notes, and such an honor to hold their trust. I remembered what a sacred fellowship we have in this diocese, and not just among the clergy. Bishops, Priests, Deacons, lay leaders, congregants. All together, all being one. That is why our annual gathering in

convention is so sacred. It is a kind of visible expression of our sacred communion, our common adventure as the disciples of Our Lord. I think we are precious in God's sight. Certainly you are precious in mine.

Yesterday we made a remarkable beginning to this convention. Many have told me last night and this morning that it was the best opening to one of our conventions ever. We came to spend time in contemplation of the Beloved Community, and how we build that together. Eric Law yesterday let us through a fantastic exercise in discernment of the Beloved Community and the ways in which our Presiding Bishop defines that and calls us into it. That was followed by a performance of Chuck Kramer's play "New York Lamentation," directed by Jeannine Otis. The early evening brought the Me Too liturgy, and the sacred solemn telling of stories of abuse and the sexualization of power here in this our own diocese. All of this became a way of our entering into a convention in which all of our business can take place in the light of Beloved Community and our call to the fullness of the Christian life.

There have been some changes in my staff over the last year, and I want to note those and invite the new folks to rise and be seen. In the spring I invited the Reverend John Perris to take the position of Canon to the Ordinary, following Blake Rider's resignation early in the year. He began his duties right at the beginning of the summer, and over these months he has demonstrated that he was the superlative choice, and I am happy to commend him to you and recognize him now. [John stands]

Richard Sloan is not here today, but he was one of the longest serving people on the Bishop's Staff, through three episcopates, until he resigned and retired at the end of 2017. He has now taken up significant work with Seamen's Church Institute, visiting container ships in Port Newark with the SCI chaplains. He emails me from time to time, and I know is finding satisfaction in that work and in the first season of his retirement.

The first person I brought onto my staff after becoming bishop was Deborah Tammearu as Canon for Transition Ministry. It has been an absolute delight to work with her, and I constantly hear from parishes their accolades for the wise

and gracious help she gave them in their priest searches. Deb is retiring from a long ministry lived entirely within this diocese, first in Dutchess County and then for many years as rector of Saint Thomas in Mamaroneck. As she prepares to make her departure, I was happy to invite Nora Smith, who was already filling a role on my staff, to assume Deb's duties. I have utmost confidence in Nora's continuing the good work of that office on behalf of churches in transition. [Deb stands, and then Nora]

There is a transition I want to announce today which has not already been communicated. For almost eighteen years, Michael Rebic has headed up our property support services. He has told me that he has been on almost all of the roofs and in almost all of the boiler rooms of the churches in the Diocese of New York. Michael has made the decision to retire at the end of this year, and to move to Croatia. (I am confident that this is the first time those words have ever been uttered at our convention.). It is the country of his forebears, it is a profoundly beautiful place to live, and he already speaks a bit of the language. Michael will continue to consult for us for a short spell, both for the continuity of continuing projects, and to advise me in thinking and planning for the transition in property support. He is a dear friend of this diocese, and of me, and I ask you to join me in wishing him Godspeed. [Michael stands]

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Several years ago, the congregation which worshipped at Saint Mary's Church in Scarborough realized that it had run completely out of gas and asked to be dissolved as a parish. This was a sadness, as that church had a long and noble history. But you have heard me say that it is as important to end well as it is to begin well, and their decision was faithful and by it they honored one another and the people who had come before them. No sooner had they vacated the premises, though, than a congregation of the Church of South India approached the diocese with a proposal to rent the church from the Diocese of New York, and to begin an exploration into the possibility that they might as a congregation accept the jurisdiction of the Bishop of New York and join our Episcopal diocese. They are coming to the end of the lease agreement we made with them, and have now stated their hope to seek admission as a parish of the Diocese of

New York within the coming year, to be effective at our convention in November 2019. This is a remarkable and faithful community of people whom we will be proud to count as our brothers and sisters. In anticipation of that happy day, I will ask for a resolution to be drawn from my address to admit them to this convention with seat and voice but without vote. Will the representatives of Saint Mary's Church stand to be recognized and welcomed? [They stand]

In addition, in the year just past the congregations of Saint Andrew's and Saint Luke's churches in Beacon have made a full merger to become one parish. For many years it has been hoped that they might one day have a common future, and it is with great joy that we may celebrate the culmination of this long dream. What this means, however, is that they are no longer either Saint Andrew's Church or Saint Luke's Church, but a wholly new parish: Saint Andrew and Saint Luke Episcopal Church. Therefore I will also ask for a resolution to be drawn from this address to admit them as a new parish of the Diocese of New York, with seat, voice and vote. It is our custom that resolutions drawn from the bishop's address be moved and seconded immediately following the address, but not voted on until later in the afternoon when we take up all of the resolutions before the convention. Today I will call for a vote right after these resolutions are offered, so that Saint Mary's, and Saint Andrew and Saint Luke, may be admitted now and participate throughout this day of convention. Will their rector John Williams and the delegates from Saint Andrew and Saint Luke rise to be recognized? [They stand]

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A bit later in this program you will hear the report of the Budget Committee, and see the 2019 budget of the Diocese of New York. Last year I had the unenviable task of informing you in this address that we would be presenting a deficit budget for 2018, and that we expected to remain in deficits through 2019 and probably in 2020 as well. We were facing some issues in our accounting which were long-standing, and were going to require some serious digging in for a while to remedy and repair. I do not intend to give the Budget Committee report now, but I want to give you the happy news that some very good, hard and focused work by the Budget Committee, chaired by the Reverend Matthew Mead, and the Finance

Committee, chaired by Mr. William Wright, and the most exhaustive and scrupulous work by Esslie Hughes and the people in our Business Office have brought resolution to many of the structural issues we were facing, and for 2019 we are presenting a balanced budget. I say that with enormous gladness, and I give thanks for the transparency and health of our financial systems. The only shadow on that news is the continuing burden of underpayment or nonpayment of Apportioned Share by too many churches. It forces a terrible unfairness onto those churches which are paying their fair share. When we began sorting this budget out in the spring I told the committee that I would look to make visits with vestries of non-participating churches but the coming of General Convention, and summer, and "stuff" pushed that resolve forward until it was too close to this convention. But this coming week letters will be mailed to churches, and through this winter I will be visiting with the vestries of non-contributing churches. The subject of those conversations will be less about budgets and money and the responsibility of people to pay their bills, than it will be about discerning short-and-long-term viability for communities and congregations.

But that leads me to another matter. The Strategic Plan which we adopted at this convention in 2016 included a directive to study the formulas by which we assign Apportioned Share formulas to parishes. I want you to know that this work has begun. Early this year I appoint a task force from among the Diocesan Trustees, and asked them as a first step of this process to engage a study of dioceses like this one (there are no exact parallels to the Diocese of New York, but there are dioceses of similar complexity), to compare relative Apportioned Shares. That task force has completed their work, and it is exhaustive. They have returned a profoundly important document to the Trustees and to me, and we have learned that while all of the dioceses are in a similar ballpark relative to one another, there is a range, and the highest tier of our Apportioned Share formula is measurably higher than others. The information does not as yet support specific recommendations, but I have suggested to the task force that there may be ways in which we can do some restructuring to provide assessment relief to parishes without abandoning the portfolio of parish support services, or our commitment to churches in poor communities, which makes up so much of our budget. It is very much my hope and expectation that we will return to the 2019 Convention with resolutions to that effect, and I remain grateful for your patience.

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Let me tell you a story. Saint Martin's and Saint Luke's Episcopal Church in Harlem has two church buildings. Saint Martin's is located in the heart of Harlem on Malcolm X Boulevard, and Saint Luke's is right behind City College just south of Sugar Hill. Over time, deferred building maintenance has made both buildings all but derelict, and both congregations have declined precipitously. The parish stopped holding worship services in Saint Luke's altogether several years ago. As we went into 2017 it was becoming clear that the building issues at Saint Martin's Church were becoming more urgent, and conversations with the warden and vestry began taking place. By April we learned that it was not a certainty, but it was very possible, that the massive stone bell tower on Saint Martin's might collapse within thirty days, together with the several tons of bells in the city's second-largest carillon overhead. Facing these extreme safety concerns, I met with the vestry that month and laid out for them the challenge that was right in front of us, and the 2.4 million dollar estimate for the repairs and restoration. Saint Martin's had no money, but they did own two brownstones in Harlem, the sale of which would generate easily more money than what would be needed to save the church. Given the urgency of acting quickly I told them that the diocese would be willing to pay for the building work from a temporary draw on our endowment if the church would contract to sell the brownstones within two years and repay the loan. I offered them, in effect, a 2.4 million dollar secured, but interest free, loan. They liked that plan.

However, fourteen months later, we had yet to get the signature of the warden on the promissory note, which was becoming an increasing worry, but we could not wait to begin stabilizing the tower. By the spring of 2018 we had spent some half a million dollars of endowment money, as yet unsecured by contract. The building did not in fact fall down in thirty days, but fourteen months later it was screaming at us to get our attention. I went up in the bell tower. I don't recommend it. You can see sunlight streaming through the cracks between the stones. There are massive 1500-pound capstones on the four corners of the tower which are no longer attached to the building. As our architect said, the building is being held up by just gravity, but another winter will probably bring

it down. In June of this year the condition of Saint Martin's Church was reported to the Department of Buildings by a subcontractor who is mandated to report dangerous buildings. Violation notices began to appear on the doors of the church and in the mail, and we were threatened with the shuttering of the building. Continued efforts to get the attention of the warden proved fruitless (and here, in fairness, I must say that the warden would tell this story differently), and in July I went to the Standing Committee to discuss the advisability of declaring the church a vulnerable congregation and restructuring its leadership. Saint Martin's met every condition set by the canon for this action. With the looming crisis, and with the unanimous consent of the Standing Committee I declared them so, secured the doors to the church, dissolved the existing vestry, and appointed an Administrative Authority to carry out the day-to-day governance of the church. The people on the Administrative Authority are all members of Saint Martin's Church, and the title to none of their property was transferred to the diocese. The parish continues to govern itself and own its own buildings, and the great bulk of the congregation, some fifty to sixty people, are coming together every week in worship, glad their church will be saved, glad for the partnership with the diocese, and glad for the new parish leadership. This has been really hard, but it has been rewarding too, not least in seeing the faith, hope and courage of members of that congregation who are looking to a new future, and in seeing the same in the exceptional four people who make up the Administrative Authority of this parish. They are people of sacrificial self offering, and I would like them to stand now and be recognized. [They stand]

I am telling you this story because it is getting into the papers, and onto the internet, and I owe it to you to tell you of decisions we are making which effect, however temporarily, the endowment and the financial foundation of this diocese. There will be a happy conclusion to the story of Saint Martin's and Saint Luke's and their buildings, and the diocesan endowment is secure. But I am also telling you this story to emphasize that all of this is the consequence of long term neglect. It was preventable. Here is the lesson: if you do not take care of your buildings you will live to see them torn to the ground. But there is something else. If Saint Martin's had been condemned we would have had to pay probably a million dollars to raze it to the ground and haul off hundreds of thousands of pounds of stone and debris. These assets were built up by the faithful of the

generations who came before us in that parish for the service of God and God's mission, and it does them a terrible disrespect for us now to let it all go for nothing. So let's not do that. Not at Saint Martin's, not at Saint Luke's, and not anywhere else either.

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This summer your bishops and delegates traveled to Austin, Texas for the General Convention of the Episcopal Church. I believe that you will see a short video this afternoon about that event. It was a good convention. It was with great gladness that we saw the Diocese of Cuba and their bishop Griselda Delgado welcomed back into the Episcopal Church. I had the privilege of serving on the Cuba Legislative Committee, and I came away feeling that the work we did to prepare the ground for that action was some of the most fulfilling and important work I have ever done in the church outside my own diocese. As we said in Austin, ¡Cuba Sí!" We also finished work begun at the 2015 Convention regarding same sex marriage, access to which is now ensured for people in every place in the church. Processes were created to begin a study of the Book of Common Prayer, now over forty years old, and the new liturgies and forms which these times may require or ask of us. Our current prayer book has been memorialized and will always be part of our life, but we will develop expansions of those liturgies for new generations. This is not short-term work, but it is exciting and filled with potential and possibility. On Sunday we took buses to a detention center near the border to reach out in prayer to people separated from their children and held now in lockdown. We stood under the kind of baking hot sun that only Texas can provide, but the connections made across culture, across distance, and across language were powerful. All of these were among the most gratifying outcomes of our time in Austin. They were for me.

But on the eve of the first legislative day a liturgy was held at which stories of the sexualization of power in the Episcopal Church were told, stories raised up by the invitation of the church as a response to the Me Too Movement. Stories from the victims of unjust power or sexual harassment and abuse were read, anonymously, by others. This took place in the context of prayer and hymnody, profoundly respectfully. It was extremely moving. And that liturgy in many ways

set the tone for the convention to come. Those stories remained with us, and led to unplanned moments, at least in the House of Bishops, where bishops came forward and told their own stories. No one will ever forget it. The courage, the vulnerability, the trust.

Last night we held such a liturgy here. The same structure was brought to this convention to enable us to hear four stories from our own life and diocese told in the same way, offered to our collective ears and hearts. To our repentance, as well, and to our commitment to the amendment of our common life. (And here I want to tell you so that you know, and because it has been asked, that the people who read the narratives of abuse here last night were not telling their own stories. Following the precedent set in Austin, they were reading the words of others, whose anonymity we promised to protect.). You have received a letter outlining processes in the diocese for people who have accounts which they must make to bring them forward. There are avenues for those who simply need to tell their story and have it heard. And there are other avenues for those who must bring formal complaints and ask for the judicial processes of the church. We are committed to transparency and compassion and the making and preserving of justice in the church.

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So in the midst of this new Me Too era, we held our spring Priests Conference, and on the second day a meditation offered by our retreat leader led priests who have been the victims of sexualized power or unjust authority to want to stand and tell their stories. In the midst of those offerings, the abuses committed by Bishop Paul Moore were raised by a victim of the bishop, along with concerns about the accountability the church must be equipped to require of those in high places. The words “Serial Predator” were used, and not unfairly, and the raw emotional power of this witness, coming as it did in the midst of people’s stories of their own abuse, and right into the complex feelings that so many of the clergy continue to hold for one who was widely seen as a prophetic leader of the church, meant that the remainder of the conference became inevitably focused on these revelations. Clergy who were not present knew something had happened but

didn't know exactly what, and this has continued to be part of the life and conversation among clergy in the diocese.

At a meeting of clergy some weeks later, when this was being discussed, I said that there is a file on Paul Moore, but that I had not read it. I was scolded a bit for that and told to go get that file and find out what is in it. So now I have, and I have learned that there were a solid handful of formal complaints brought against him. And I know as well that there are as many or more who have told me their stories, but never made formal charges, and who are not in the file. There are three things I want you to know. First, Bishop Moore was held accountable. The complaints were referred to the Presiding Bishop, Edmund Browning, and an agreement was reached to end Bishop Moore's public and active ministry. Today this would have been handled differently. It would have been transparent. The action taken would have become known. There probably would have been canonical disciplines in addition to the restriction on service, not excluding his possible deposition from ordained ministry. But it was in any case heard and handled. It was handled on a different day in a different time, when people didn't know as much as they do now. But those in authority did their best on the day they were given. And my predecessor Mark Sisk, when these stories came to light again ten years ago, years after Bishop Moore had died, wrote a letter to you our diocese where he named Bishop Moore's behaviors as exploitive of vulnerable people. And that had not been publicly said before, and it must be said that when the bishop revealed that there were people who refused to hear it.

I also want you to know that people who came forward and gave their account were helped. They were helped at the time, and years later when the bishop's daughter wrote her book and these stories came back up out of the shadows, I was serving in this diocese as Canon Pastor and there were priests who sought me out. I hope I helped. And just now in these weeks I have received a letter from one of the long ago original complainants who wanted me to know that he is doing well, and is better, and is strong and fulfilled, though, he said, "Bishop Moore has always remained in the shadows of my life and spirituality." And he told me that he had been promised confidentiality when he made his complaint, but if it would help me now he would waive that confidentiality and let me use

his name. I am not going to use his name. I don't think I need to. But the fact of his willingness to reveal and expose himself moved me deeply. It spoke of the grace of God, and of the power of Christian healing, and of redemption and freedom. And deep personal courage. All those things.

Finally I want you to know that people who came forward at great personal risk long ago to make their case against their bishop, only to see the rush of his defenders after the bishop's daughter's book was published, wanted the leaders of their church to know that, whatever others might say about their own experience of, or relationship with, Bishop Moore, *their* sexual relationships with him were not consensual. Not Consensual. And some of them continue to carry a great weight of pain from that to this day.

There are people in the diocese, probably some of you, wondering why we are talking about Bishop Moore again. We are talking about Bishop Moore because one of his victims told his story, and that story is alive, and because within this new attention brought to Bishop Moore's misconduct the names of other abusers are coming up again, people whose allegations of wrongdoing date from the time of their service in this diocese under his episcopate. Like Bishop Moore, all of these names are of people now long dead, and so far in these days no one has come forward with a personal account of their abuse except the courageous voice at the Priest's Conference regarding Bishop Moore.

But also: Bishop Moore is the exceptional case. He was the *Ordinary* – which means that he had the responsibility to “set the order” for this diocese. He was the Bishop of New York, and one of the learnings from watching the Roman Catholic Church sort through their own far greater history of sexual abuse is that when the people at the top of the hierarchy have their own secrets to keep, everyone else gets to do anything they want. And in this diocese, when Paul Moore was the bishop, it seems that some of them did. It feels to me now that we may be coming to the threshold of a different way of being in the church, but if we are it is all the more important that we uncover that past, see it with our eyes, and give dignity and hope to those who may have seen their accounts dismissed or covered over. The resources put forward by our task force may be the beginning of a transformation in our common life. But there is also work

which must be done by me, and by this diocese, quite apart from the care of individual victims or the accountability demanded of individual offenders. Even as people are coming forward to tell their own stories, the hour is coming when the diocese itself must tell its story, make its account, and by the grace of God hope to make its peace.

Before moving on I want to say one thing more. Part of the difficulty we may have in the Episcopal Church in looking at the abuses of Paul Moore is that he was the bishop of your church for close to two decades, and he was for many years one of our most admired and inspirational figures. Some are finding that they can only now speak of him either as a sexual predator or as a modern prophet. But without diminishing his virtues or excusing what can only be called his *crimes*, we have to find a way to look upon him, as we hope we look upon everyone, in the fuller complexity of his mortal life in which he was simultaneously a sinner and a redeemed child of God. Like you and me. He was deeply flawed, filled with contradictions, who did terrible damage while he was doing astonishing good. Which brings me back again and again to the words of James Baldwin at his father's funeral, who listened to the flowery and admiring eulogies of his complex and abusive parent with some confusion. But then reflected in words of love and regret and power and pathos, "Thou knowest this man's fall, but thou knowest not his wrassling."

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All of this, this struggle to overcome the woundedness of our own lives and those of others, the pains done to us and the pains done by us to others, the high cost of forgiveness and the seeming impossibility of reconciliation across the chasms which separate us, all of this represents for us the birth pangs of the Beloved Community. And we have come to this convention to spend time considering that life to which we have been called by God in Christ. What Beloved Community means, and how to build it. Really, this has been before our eyes for the whole time I have been your bishop.

On the day of my second convention as bishop America was awaiting the decision by the Grand Jury in Ferguson,, Missouri. I asked you then to open the doors of

your church that day and serve your community. But then came riots, and the suffocation of Eric Garner in this diocese, and an epidemic of shootings of African American men across our cities – daily, weekly – and the birth of the Black Lives Matter movement. In June 2015 we saw the assassination of nine black men and women, gathered just to pray and read scripture – not afraid to welcome the young white stranger with the scary eyes – at Emmanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston. And the next day we were washed by the tsunami of forgiveness from the living stones of God’s Kingdom.

At the next convention we called for churches and people to help that flood of young people – teenagers and children – fleeing the violence of their home countries, making the dangerous journey north, coming to the border of this country and flinging themselves into the arms of policemen and border patrol agents for thanksgiving. They moved on into shelters and foster homes, and one by one our parishes helped. Lawyers in our diocese offered their pro bono services. We tried to be Christians for them.

Then came Charlottesville, and the emboldened re-emergence of the Ku Klux Klan and the American Nazi Party, fully armed, onto the streets of a significant American city. Then Deborah Danner, a member of this diocese, was shot in her bedroom in the Bronx at midnight because the police who were called to her apartment by a neighbor alarmed at her ravings were scared and confused by her mental illness, and killed her.

Then came a new immigration crisis, with an official policy to take children away from their parents as a cruel disincentive for people to come to America. All this time later some are still in foster homes or detention centers, and some may never be returned to their families. Is this America? Then came the Me Too Movement, of which I have spoken already, with the call for attention paid to the daily aggressions and the sexual violence with which so many people live.

After the shootings at the high school in Parkland, Florida, Emma Gonzales wept through an impassioned call for sanity and attention and some measure of responsibility by elected leaders. She got thoughts and prayers. Three weeks ago a political extremist filled the mail with pipe bombs sent to politicians with

whom he disagreed. Two weeks ago eleven people were murdered at The Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, a symptom of the rising tide of anti-Semitism in America. Three days ago thirteen young people were shot and killed in a bar-and-grill in Thousand Oaks, California. Where I went to High School. Where Jenny Talley's father was the Mayor. But between Pittsburgh and Thousand Oaks America experienced other eleven mass shootings.

We have lived through, and continue to do so, an astonishing period of the violent rending of a broken covenant. Some thread which however tenuously bound us to one another, even across the painful history of our common life, seems now to have been cut. The foundations shaken. On every tongue is the lament, or for some the crowing, over the divide which now separates Americans from Americans, and the rage that simmers under everything. There seemed to be a feeling on all sides on this last election day that everything was at stake. That we could lose America. And as I have noted before, the divisions which cut through our culture and society also tear at the fabric of our church. Many of our churches are politically and culturally homogenous – “bubbles,” as is said – but in those of our churches which include in their congregations Democrats and Republicans, liberals and conservatives, supporters of the president and those who are repulsed by him, there is fear that the unity which binds the community is more fragile than they knew, and increasingly endangered. They tell me so.

The two days of this diocesan Convention mark the eightieth anniversary of Kristallnacht, the Night of Broken Glass. From the night of November 9th through the morning of November 10th 1938. It was the day when the brutes came out in Germany, and the Holocaust began, with the extermination of the Jews. And the homosexuals. And the gypsies. And the mentally ill. I do not want to draw a comparison between that day and this. For all of the worries people have about America in 2018 we do not live in Nazi Germany. But this anniversary, and the crushing weight of human suffering it represents, demands our attention, that we may by reflection on the seemingly easy rise of the demonic in Germany be forever mindful of how easily things we count on and take for granted can slip through our fingers and be lost.

Martin Luther King was a clear-eyed realist, and he made his witness and came to his martyrdom in an era every bit as violent and confusing and as complicated as ours. Really much more so. Race riots and political riots. Assassinations and racial violence. Wars and rumors of wars. He might have been a dreamer, but he was certain that despite everything those dreams would be realized absolutely, in God's time, in the every day reality of the shared life of the American people. And for him what that required and demanded was the imperative for people of faith to choose with sober deliberation, and to build with character and judgment and sacrifice and Christly love what he called the Beloved Community.

Which is the principle we are holding before ourselves at this convention. The same principle and the same imperative. You have heard me say that the world needs the church to be the church, and the church needs its priests to be priests, and the church needs its people to be Christians. It is a moment to guard our hearts. When the community of Christian people resembles or mimics or embraces the same tribalism that is infecting the larger culture around us, the possibility of our making a true Christian witness before the world becomes undone.

We as people of faith may make no peace with evil. All of these injustices and prejudices and violence, and the degradation of people, require our fullest resistance, while at the same time the demands of nonviolence and the commandments of Jesus Christ compel us to reach across the divide in love to invite communion and transformation together with those we name adversary or enemy. "You have heard it said that you should love your friend and hate your enemy," Jesus said. "But I say love your enemy. Do good to those who hate you. Bless those who curse you." And Martin Luther King added, "With every ounce of our energy we must continue to rid this nation of the incubus of segregation. But we shall not in the process relinquish our privilege and our obligation to love. While abhorring segregation, we shall love the segregationist. This is the only way to create the beloved community."

Which means that the challenge for Christians today is to resist not only the evil that people do, but the seductive temptation to fall away from one another into

camps. Recently I made my visit to a parish on Sunday morning, at which two quite young African American girls had written the prayers of the people, and then read them in church. And when their young voices said, "We pray for Donald Trump our president," I thought "Maranatha. Lord come quickly." So that if we really are in the last days, may these children even now teach us how to be Christians.

Let us go back from this convention to the people we serve and the congregations where we make our lives and shape and nurture the people who share our lives. Let us reclaim our baptisms, and the renouncing of the evil that besets us from without and the evil which wells up from within us – because the world needs us to, is counting on us to – and affirm and embrace and follow and be lifted up by Our Lord Jesus Christ. Let these our churches be laboratories where we may practice being the Kingdom of Heaven. Let us practice being Christians like the men and women at Emmanuel Church with forgiveness in their hearts even in their final hour. Practice being people of God like the Jewish doctors and nurses in Pittsburgh who treated the shooter who even as they cared for him screamed his desire to kill them all. Practice, Like Martin Luther King who on the night before he was taken from us said of the constant threats against his life, "I don't care about that now. I just want to do God's will." Let us practice being Christian so that in the hour when it matters, when everything everywhere is on the line, we will be good at it. And if they drive nails in us like they did to Jesus, it will be okay. For we will reveal the miracle and wonder that is the Beloved Community. And live and die in charity with all the world. Amen.