

**235<sup>th</sup> Convention**  
**Saturday, November 10, 2018**  
**Address from Bishop Daniel Gutiérrez**

It is a blessing to be with you for my third convention serving you as your Bishop. Over this time, we have come to know one another, prayed, envisioned, laughed, and shared our hearts, fears, and faith in what we are called to become. Last night, I spoke of our collective call to prayer, holiness, to draw near to the heart of Jesus and draw near to the heart of one another. Turning hearts of stone into hearts of flesh, discerning things only the heart can understand.

We have come a long way together, through building relationships, emphasis on communication, evangelism, mentorship, congregational development, investing in our churches through the Growth and Development Fund, emptying ourselves, trusting, realigned youth ministry to serve as a resource to the churches closest to their walk, creating a safe place for Christian disagreement and discussion, fiscal transparency and a foundation set in Jesus Christ.

This Diocese has done the hard work of creating a new mission church process. For the past year, working with vicars and voices from the community, we now have a process and a path forward into the future. We have changed the way we ask for your support - we prayerfully request that you contribute your sacred gifts.

We are strengthening our bonds with one another and the wider Church.

We are the body of Christ with an unshakeable belief in Jesus Christ. Yes, we have outreach, ministry, and mission - but let's look at them as being sacredly present in the community.

We have turned the proverbial pyramid upside down. Your diocesan staff is out in the community and churches daily. We have emphasized that the churches do not exist to serve us, we exist to serve you. Now, when I go out the question asked is no longer "are you going to close or sell our church?"

People enthusiastically inquire, "How can we grow together?" "Where are the opportunities?"

We have worked extensively with our smaller churches and we will continue to do so. Now, we are walking with medium-size churches in the next few years.

Our budget now reflects our commitment to preparation and mission, to grow the Church and to go out and be present in the community.

The Church only grows when it goes. We are going to the frontiers of poverty, marginalization, and those society has forgotten. Let us go with courage, hope and holiness. We are stepping into the field, tending the soil, nurturing, removing obstacles, and planting new seeds.

This convention is a place not only for the prayerful work of the Church; it is now a time to celebrate your work and life as a people of God in this Diocese. This year, we add service to our time together. We have created blessing bags for those in need - together. I want to emphasize that what we do together as the living body of Christ, the church, is not work. It is a sacred calling. Each one of you in your churches and as a Diocese. It is holy because your lives transform it to holiness.

We are truly revolutionary because we are willing to know Jesus and change the world. I stand before you with greater love, hope, and faith than that summer day in 2016 when I offered my call, my priesthood, my episcopacy to God and you.

We need to strengthen our path of reconciliation and healing. We cannot hope to reconcile all of creation back to God, if we do not commit to that work with one another first.

This is a blessed opportunity. The Church is not the Church of the 20th Century. This may be frightening - there are millions in this city who have not heard the Good News. The field is plentiful. The world needs that message of Jesus Christ, a transformational way to live, a better life. This is the Gospel message.

To centering everything on Jesus, the willingness to keep growing, the courage to be innovative, the readiness to risk failure, the openness to trust. To move from our heads into our hearts.

As you know, I do not like being confined to the office. My call is to journey with you, to love you. We have come a long way in a short amount of time; there is great hope in our church. New ministries, new opportunities, a new life in Jesus Christ. This is a great time to be the church, to be the church in the Diocese of Pennsylvania.

We have done so much together.

My faith is hope and God in every situation. God in unexpected places, grace and power from unexpected people. Joy conquering despair. This unshakeable belief in Jesus Christ.

Let us show the world what it is means to be the Church.

As your Bishop, I am called deeper in union, prayer and holiness. A pastor to the clergy and a shepherd to the laity. I am firm in the belief that a shepherd should smell like the sheep. Each day I want with be with you. Each meeting, visitation, I look into your eyes and see hope, faith, and I see Christ. I am your servant.

This call is not about me, it is about you. It is about God and how the world sees Christ through our journey together. To labor together in the field, nurture and plant the seeds. You have helped me learn to become a Bishop, to walk with you.

As a shepherd, I have learned that a shepherd at times leads, but also a shepherd walks in the middle and often walks behind guiding toward a place of nourishment and fulfillment. It is a humility that is deepening and a commitment that emphasizes you, collaboration, journeying as a flock following the Good Shepherd Jesus Christ.

I will make mistakes, but I will always ask forgiveness and then transform. As I stated previously, there are other bishops who know more than I ever will. Know I will be faithful. There will never be another bishop who loves you as I love you. It is important that you know that as your Bishop I passionately believe in our Lord. I love God with all my mind, heart and soul.

My deepest urging, that intensifies daily, is to be intimately united with him, so that I can experience in the depth of my being, the great love of God; so that I can allow His life to become my life. For my beloved priests and deacons let's revive again and again our sacred calling.

As a diocese, this is not work ... this is a holy calling as a people, it is a sacred presence. It is a holy work because your lives make it holy.

As we step into the dawn of the third decade of the 21st century, we must ask ourselves where we see ourselves in six to seven years. Through my office hours in the Diocese every other week; through the rebuilding of the deanery structure where we share the Eucharist, share our lives and ministries, work and eat together; the presence of diocesan council; the life of standing committee; the continuation of the pilgrimage and my visitations; I have listened and learned. Through your prayers and suggestions, we have set our sights upon significant holy markers along the path to determine our journey. I call these sacred points along the journey. They can be measured by our growth and they will equip us for the final destination. This is what I have heard from you and your desire to be the living diocese.

These are some things I would like us to do together in the next six to seven years:

1. The need for a centralized place for gathering information in community. Thus, we are forming The Shepherd's Call. An educational and spiritual institute of learning, discernment, community presence and new life. One place where vestries, clergy, laity and all our Diocese can find resources and information. A two-year program that will make all available resources through communal and online courses. Use the talent and treasure of the Diocese. Anyone will be able to learn best practices, how to set up fundraising, start an endowment, facility maintenance, spiritual direction, community presence such as outreach, mission, etc. We will use present resources and the great talent assembled in this room and in the community as teachers. We will partner with each of our churches (think of the food pantry's, kitchens, the gifts of congregations, schools, Episcopal Community Services, that are resources present in the Diocese.) I want to thank Kathleen McClave for her work and leadership in developing the framework for Shepherd's Call.
2. Plant a school in an underserved neighborhood in our Diocese using the model of the St. James School and partnering with Episcopal Academy and Church Farm School and our universities. This could be in West Philadelphia, South Philadelphia or Chester County. Not only to educate but to create disciples. This is a way we may be able to use existing facilities at our closed churches. If the Church is not teaching, evangelizing and healing, we are not living into our heart.
3. Through partnerships, create a network of 10 wellness centers in our churches that serve the physical health needs of communities. This builds on the work we are already doing.
4. Partner with three agencies and interfaith organizations to effectively address poverty, hunger, violence. We have Episcopal Community Services (ECS). We have been working with Dave Griffith at ECS and Rev. Peter Vanderveen and Victoria Sicks.
5. Reestablish effective ministry to the shut-ins, the matriarchs and patriarchs who have laid the foundation.
6. Plant three Canterbury Houses with one on the Main Line.
7. Establish a chaplaincy program for prison ministry and a renewed dedication toward racial healing.
8. Establishment of a time line for those churches that are closed. A two-year process for either reuse or discernment on the next steps. There has to be activity or a plan. Maintenance of closed churches without a plan for use is drying up our sacred funds that could be used for mission.
9. Using the model of small house churches, and empowering the laity for leadership, plant five churches in six years. Church done differently, but still church.
10. Ordain 60 deacons in six years. If we are going to grow, we need to equip our churches for the growth and our sacred presence in the community. Deacons are needed to take Jesus' work into the world. We will grow. If our budget is committed to missional work, we will need more deacons. Our new Archdeacons and the continuation of our council of deacons will be an integral part of this ministry.

Let our faith and diocesan heartbeat open greater horizons in Jesus Christ. Our hearts are not stone; no, they are a flesh, molded in love that reflects a beautiful light in a darkened world. Let's draw near and be the heartbeat of Christ.

Miracles will occur. For the brave heart is not discouraged, the hopeful heart that makes the best of all things. What are we waiting for? Pull close to the heart of Christ. Let us turn hearts of stone into hearts of flesh. The world is waiting.

I am confident that Christ the Good Shepherd will answer our prayers and bless our work. Let us go forth, with a new spirit and offer the life and heart of Jesus Christ. There are things only the heart can comprehend.