VISIONS OF A VICAR

As I travel about the Diocese and meet with various groups, I am asked about what it means to be an Episcopalian. It is an interesting question, because when I ask that of you and others, I quickly discover that few Episcopalians know who they are. Just last week one lady said to me, "Someone asked me about the Episcopal Church, and I didn't know how to answer her. I just told her that I am an Episcopalian because I have always been one." There is, to be sure, a modicum of truth in that statement--a sense of loyalty and devotion to tradition--, but it hardly answers the question. The Bishop's Committee asked that we focus on evangelism in 1988 and I promised to provide some training in that ministry. As I have reflected upon evangelism, I have decided that in order to evangelize, we need to know who we are. How can we invite others to participate in our Christian community if we do not know to what we are inviting them? To that end, I will be addressing in the next five issues of the Alpha and Omega the issue of identity, that is, who we are as Anglicans, and, therefore, as Episcopalians.

In 1986-1988 we celebrate the centennial of the Chicago-Lambeth Quadilateral. This statement was adopted by the House of Bishops in Chicago in 1886 and revised and adopted by all the Anglican Bishops at Lambeth Conference in 1888. The Quadilateral articulated for the church the perimeters of the faith, that is, those things necessary for unity within the Christian church. For us, these same four essentials define our identity as Episcopalians. Printed below is the text of the Quadilateral which you can also find in the Book of Common Prayer, pp. 876-878. I ask that you read this statement carefully and bring your questions to me. In each subsequent issue of the Alpha and Omega, I will elaborate on each point of the Quadilateral so that we can come to a common understanding of our heritage, tradition, and a renewed vision for the future.

The Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral 1886, 1888

Adopted by the House of Bishops
Chicago, 1886

We, Bishops of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, in Council assembled as Bishops in the Church of God, do hereby solemnly declare to all whom it may concern, and especially to our fellow-Christians of the different Communions in this land, who, in their several spheres, have contended for the religion of Christ:

1. Our earnest desire that the Saviour's prayer, "That we all may be one," may, in its deepest and truest sense, be speedily fulfilled;

2. That we believe that all who have been duly baptized with water, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, are members of the Holy Catholic Church;

3. That in all things of human ordering or human choice, relating to modes of worship and discipline, or to traditional customs, this Church is ready in the spirit of love and humility to forego all preferences of her own;

4. That this Church does not seek to absorb other Communions, but rather, co-operating with them on the basis of a common Faith and Order, to discountenance schism, to heal the wounds of the Body of Christ, and to promote the charity which is the chief of Christian graces and the visible manifestation of Christ to the world;

But furthermore, we do hereby affirm that the Christian unity . . . can be restored only by the return of all Christian communions to the principles of unity exemplified by the undivided Catholic Church during the first ages of its existence; which principles we believe to be the substantial deposit of Christian Faith and Order committed by Christ and his Apostles to the Church unto the end of the world, and therefore incapable of compromise or surrender by those who have been ordained to be its stewards and trustees for the common and equal benefit of all men.

As inherent parts of this sacred deposit, and therefore as essential to the restoration of unity among the divided branches of Christendom, we account the following, to wit:

1. The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament as the revealed Word of God.

2. The Nicene Creed as the sufficient statement of the Christian Faith.

3. The two Sacraments, — Baptism and the Supper of the Lord, — ministered with unfailing use of Christ's words of institution and of the elements ordained by Him.

4. The Historic Episcopate, locally adapted in the methods of its administration to the varying needs of the nations and peoples called of God into the unity of His Church.

Furthermore, Deeply grieved by the sad divisions which affect the Christian Church in our own land, we hereby declare our desire and readiness, so soon as there shall be any authorized response to this Declaration, to enter into brotherly conference with all or any Christian Bodies seeking the restoration of the organic unity of the Church, with a view to the earnest study of the conditions under which so priceless a blessing might happily be brought to pass.

Note: While the above form of the Quadrilateral was adopted by the House of Bishops, it was not enacted by the House of Deputies, but rather incorporated in a general plan referred for study and action to a newly created Joint Commission on Christian Reunion.

Lambeth Conference of 1888
Resolution 11

That, in the opinion of this Conference, the following Articles supply a basis on which approach may be by God's blessing made towards Home Reunion:

(a) The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as "containing all things necessary to salvation," and as being the rule and ultimate standard of faith.

(b) The Apostles' Creed, as the Baptismal Symbol; and the Nicene Creed, as the sufficient statement of the Christian faith.

(c) The two Sacraments ordained by Christ Himself — Baptism and the Supper of the Lord — ministered with unfailing use of Christ's words of Institution, and of the elements ordained by Him.

(d) The Historic Episcopate, locally adapted in the methods of its administration to the varying needs of the nations and peoples called of God into the Unity of His Church.

POTPOURRI

--January 6: The Feast of the Epiphany. There will be a worship service at 7:00pm, followed by an Epiphany party. Let us all come and celebrate the manifestation of Christ to all persons.

--Mo. Karen will be in Boston, January 11-12, as the representative of the Diocese to a national conference entitled "Women in the Episcopate." This is an exciting opportunity to see what is going on in the rest of the church and to be part of a dialogue with many scholars, clergy, and church leaders on the issue of women as bishops.

--On Friday, January 15, the churches in Madison will celebrate at an ecumenical service the "Week for Christian Unity." The service will be at Trinity Lutheran at 7:30pm. We will be asked to help with the reception following the service. More details later.

--January 31: Annual Meeting. Service at 11am, followed by a potluck dinner and meeting. All are encouraged to be there.

--February 7: Bishop's Visitation. If you are interested in being confirmed or received into the Episcopal Church, please let Mo. Karen know. There will be an Inquirer's Class scheduled on each Thursday evening in January beginning at 7:30pm. Even if you are already confirmed, you are invited to come and refresh your memory as to what the Episcopal Church is all about.. If you are interested in attending this class, please let Mo. Karen know.

--The Episcopal Clergy in Sioux Falls have organized a pastoral care system whereby one or more clergy are available 24 hours a day for emergency care. This will include any hospital emergencies as well as crisis intervention. Therefore, if Mo. Karen cannot be reached either at the office in Madison or her home, she can be reached by calling Calvary Cathedral in Sioux Falls at 336-3486. If the Cathedral office is closed the call will be forwarded to an answering service. Please keep this in mind if an emergency arises for you.

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Pastor Gentz to go to Rapid City

The Rev. Brian Gentz, pastor of St. John Lutheran will be leaving Madison as of January 31, 1988, and will assume a new position at Calvary Lutheran Church in Rapid City. We are grateful for the support of Pastor Gentz and his congregation in this last year and ask that you keep him and his family, and the St. John family in your prayers.