

## Bishop's Address, 2012

108<sup>th</sup> Annual Council of the Diocese of West Texas  
McAllen, Texas  
Friday, February 17, 2012

1. Let me begin this morning by asking you to join me in thanking our hosts, St. John's, McAllen, and all of the congregations in our Valley Convocation that are assisting in this council for their outstanding hospitality, organization, and fellowship in their care for us. These good people hosted us in 2009 as well, and I am very thankful to them for their willingness to serve us in such fine fashion.
2. I want to take this opportunity, as I do at the beginning of these addresses, to welcome and to thank our retired bishops and our guest bishops. Bishop Reed and I are deeply grateful to them for their continued collegiality and support. I would ask that all of you bishops stand so that we may greet you.
3. Before I get too far into this year's address, I want to say how much Catherine and I continue to appreciate your thoughtfulness, your kindness, and your generosity in providing a "Spirit-filled" and restful sabbatical for us in 2011. I liked it so much I'm thinking about making it an annual event.
4. In June, I will observe 30 years of ordination in this Church. As this was my first full sabbatical in those three decades, I was ready for it and it was and is a wonderful blessing in our lives. I also want to take this opportunity to thank Catherine for our life together, for her support, and for our partnership in this ministry.
5. In addition to the travel, study, rest, and refreshment, which were all integral parts of the sabbatical, one of the great blessings to me was the outstanding ministry of the diocesan staff in handling the many and varied things that come into the bishop's office. I am deeply indebted to them all, and especially to Bishop Reed who worked tirelessly and with overflowing amounts of grace to tend to the needs of the diocese. David said the sabbatical was divided into two parts for him: Part One, "The bishop won't be back for a couple of months so I guess I'll have to handle that," and Part Two, "The bishop will be back in a couple of months and that can wait for his return."
6. This year's diocesan theme is *Abound in Hope* from Romans 15:13. The word "hope" is used extensively in Scripture, expressing not only human beings' hope in God, but God's hope in human beings. Biblically grounded hope is not expressed in statements like, "I hope this problem goes away"; or, "Gee, I hope this gets better"; or, "I hope someone takes care of this."

7. Biblically grounded hope is rooted in revelation and it is lived out in “call.” It is confidently expectant and it is rooted in and sustained through a sacred commitment between God and human beings. ***Abounding in Hope*** is not a pious platitude (“trite, weak remark”), it is the deliberate action of truly believing in the promises of God. ***Abounding in Hope*** is an “active verb.”
8. The American Poet William Carlos Williams offers some poignant words about the enduring call of hope...words that I find quite encouraging as we live into our diocesan theme this year.
9. He writes: *“There’s a lot for us to worry about, even to tremble over when we stop and add it all up. But there’s also a lot of beauty and goodness, still, on this planet of ours. It is our obligation, I believe, to hold on to hope – to hold on for our dear lives to hope, even though we know there’s lots of trouble around. I don’t mean to whistle in the dark; I mean to keep our eyes on what matters, and with all our might to get through one day, then the next. We have to hold on to our ability to smile, to laugh; and we have to recall, every once in a while, how far we’ve come – because we’ve climbed our way out of many, many bad moments over the centuries.”*
10. Being hopeful is an orientation, a posture, toward life. I hope that you possess this posture, because how you approach your day matters. Your posture and attitude toward life greatly influences how you see and think about everything and everyone, every day.
11. Some days, yes, it is hard to say, “It is good.” We know this from real life experience. But a person who truly and actively lives into the belief that they are, in fact, created in the image of God cannot help but be a person who is hopeful – full of hope – even as life unfolds with its many challenges, trials, and uncertainties.
12. Jesus set this example for us in many ways. In the first chapter of Mark, we read: *Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent and believe in the good news.”* I’m sure people wondered about his sanity, especially since his cousin had just been arrested and there weren’t a lot of signs of hope and good news in the immediate situation.
13. Yet Christ possesses the ability to see through bad news to a much broader belief in good news, the Good News. If we are going to grow up into the full stature of Christ, surely that includes being a person with an orientation, a posture, fixed on hope. This is, I believe, part of what it means to “put on the Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 13:14).

14. So in this hopeful posture, let me address a few areas of our common life. First up, *Abounding in Hope* in the big picture – Anglicanism in general and The Episcopal Church in particular.
15. These continue to be challenging times for global Anglicanism. Globally, the Anglican Covenant continues to be considered. It is difficult to get an exact status on the various Provincial considerations at this time, but I can report to you what we have been able to determine thus far. As we gather for this Council, approximately 21 of the 38 Provinces have considered the Covenant and made statements regarding their position to it. There is a mix of responses, with about 6-8 Provinces having passed it or having looked favorably upon it; and about 11-13 who have reservations about sections of it or have declined to pass it at this point.
16. It will likely take several more years before all of the Provinces will consider the Covenant and offer their response to it; so the shape of what it means to be a global Communion of Churches will continue to be a focal point of our life together as Anglicans.
17. The Episcopal Church (TEC) will meet in General Convention this summer in Indianapolis, and the Anglican Covenant will be considered. The Executive Council – the elected body which oversees the Episcopal Church between meetings of the General Convention – has indicated that it cannot recommend that the General Convention pass the Covenant in its present form, and of course, its present form is the only way Provinces in the Communion can consider it.
18. As you may remember, we passed a resolution at our Diocesan Council last year in support of the Covenant. What we passed at Council last year was intended, in part, to be an example of striving for unity in a time of deep division. I do not know how Convention will ultimately respond toward the Covenant; we will see at General Convention if Executive Council's recommendation is the view that prevails.
19. Also, during General Convention there will be much discussion about restructuring ministries in TEC and in the way in which General Convention is structured. The exact nature of this conversation within the parameters of General Convention is not yet known. I expect we will receive specific information about this topic in the weeks ahead.
20. As we informed you at our Pre-Council meetings, the Diocesan Executive Board signed on with many other dioceses to co-sponsor a resolution which calls for the Church to engage this conversation with the hope of best positioning ourselves as a Church for mission and ministry as we move into the coming decades. This will not be a short process, of course, and after

General Convention I will be able to give you a clearer picture of how this conversation is moving forward.

21. General Convention will also consider a resolution from the Standing Committee on Liturgy and Music which deals with Rites for Same Gender Blessings. At the Pre-Council meetings, we shared with you a press report issued last fall regarding the work of this committee and their likely recommendations to General Convention about “trial use” of such rites.
22. This spring, we expect to review the actual report and resolution(s) which will be presented to the General Convention deputations in what is known as the “Blue Book.” This “book” includes all the reports and resolutions to be presented to General Convention as of its publication date (likely March).
23. Bishop Reed and I will be communicating with you as General Convention approaches and during the gathering, and we are counting on the leadership and membership of our diocesan family to engage subsequent conversation and responses with Godly wisdom, Christ-like compassion, and the grace of the Holy Spirit.
24. As I reflect on the deeply held and divergent views in our Church and in the Diocese at the present time, I am reminded of St. Paul’s words when he wrote to the Church at Ephesus about the important, spiritual work of reconciliation. I also referenced this passage in my remarks to you four years ago, in 2008.
25. Here is an excerpt from the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter of Ephesians: *“But now in Christ you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us...so that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it”* (Ephesians 2:13-16).
26. John Chrysostom, the Bishop of Constantinople in the late 4<sup>th</sup> and early 5<sup>th</sup> centuries, commented on this passage, stating that “(Jesus) **himself was the first instance of this reconciliation.**”
27. In this passage, St. Paul emphasizes that Jesus has taken the two groups and made them one in His body, His flesh, so that, *“through Jesus both of us have access in one Spirit”* (2.18) to God. With these words, he is saying that one does not have more access and one less access, but instead both groups have equal access by a single grace. For Paul, the hostility, the dividing wall as it were, is broken down through the cross.

28. As Paul continued his thoughts here, he wrote: “*So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God*” (Ephesians 2:17-22).
29. We would do well to remember this passage in all kinds of circumstances, because this whole missionary endeavor, our ‘venture in mission’, is built upon the foundation of Jesus’ reconciling work on the cross. If we understood our disagreements as being, literally, at ‘cross purposes’, we might come to know that yes, in fact, through Jesus Christ “*the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple*” (Ephesians 2:21).
30. Around the same time Paul wrote to the Ephesians, he also wrote to the Colossians. He told the Colossians that Jesus “*is before all things, and in him all things hold together*” (Colossians 1:17). If this statement is accurate, and I certainly believe that it is, then we must ask ourselves, “Are we in Christ?” Better yet: “***Am I in Christ?***”
31. How do we begin to answer these questions? If we are “in Christ,” what will be the affect? What will others see in us? Serious questions which beg serious theological reflection and prayer.
32. You have elected a fine group of people to represent you in Indianapolis in July, and you may be assured that on a daily basis, we will be asking ourselves “Are we in Christ?” and more specifically, “Am I in Christ?” I hope that you will be mindful of these questions in your life as well.
33. Your deputation to General Convention will, as always, be sending back daily reports to help you follow the activities and decisions of the General Convention. We will approach our time there with prayer, with Godly humility, with strong faith, and mindful that we represent a large and diverse diocese.
34. Next up: ***Abounding in Hope*** with Habitat for Humanity. I cannot imagine a stronger physical manifestation of hope than for a person to have a decent place to call home. Our diocese has a decades-long history working in cooperation with Habitat for Humanity. There are 21 Habitat affiliates within our diocesan boundaries. Since we began our partnership with Habitat in 1993 we have raised \$1,334,072 and built 29 homes.

35. Our diocese has a mindset of mission which makes such things possible. I want to continue that missionary spirit and remind us to see Habitat for Humanity as one of the vehicles for our mission work.
36. I have met with the leadership of our diocesan Habitat for Humanity Task Force over the past several months, and we have been energized with a renewed vision for our Habitat mission work. We are even changing our name from the Habitat for Humanity Task Force (“task force” implies something temporary – in our case 19 years and counting...) to **Habitat Builders for West Texas**.
37. I am asking this Diocesan Council to renew our Habitat commitment as a diocesan family in helping to provide decent and affordable homes for our neighbors. Specifically, I am asking our diocesan family, through this Diocesan Council, to commit to building three Habitat homes in the next six years.
38. This means one house, every other year: “builds” in 2013, 2015, and 2017. In the years of 2012, 2014, and 2016, we will be preparing for these homes by raising money and working with local Habitat affiliates. This effort will require about \$55,000 - \$60,000 per house, and I have every confidence we will reach our goal. The location of these homes and other details will be the work of the Habitat Builders for West Texas.
39. I am pleased to inform you that our Habitat Builders for West Texas has determined that the first of these homes will be built in Beeville, working with St. Philip’s Episcopal Church and the Habitat affiliate in that community.
40. This effort in no way suggests that a congregation could not continue our long standing practice of individual churches working directly with a local Habitat affiliate to build a home. However, I want to encourage a broad mindset and a renewed vision that we, as a diocesan family, are helping to provide homes for families. This will not be funded through traditional congregational “assessments.” Rather, it will be an effort of encouragement.
41. For example, I “encourage” each of our 90 congregations to put a minimum of \$300 dollars per year for these six years in your outreach budget. If that happens, we’ll raise \$162,000 (about 3 houses). Or, look at it another way.
42. The average Sunday attendance in the Diocese is about 9,300; with gusts up to and over 10,000 if it’s not football or hunting season. In any case, if just 1,250 (that’s about 13%) of our weekly attendees gave \$2.00 a month (\$24.00 a year for six years) we’d raise \$180,000 to build these homes. Let me reiterate how simple this is: \$2 a month by 1,250 people over a six-year period. If both of these examples were to be realized, we could have the

funding for six homes. Building three should be no problem for people of hope. Bishop Reed and I will get the ball rolling by pledging \$5,000.

43. You will hear a report during this Council from the Habitat Builders for West Texas, and they also have a booth in the exhibit area. I request that a member from your congregation's delegation at this Council visit the Habitat booth and pick up a packet of information for your congregation. Go ahead, look around your table now and point at someone to do this; better yet, raise your own hand to volunteer. And speaking of the Habitat booth, I want to thank Judson Jones who has been representing Habitat at our councils for 19 years.
44. Next – *Abounding in Hope* with Camps and Conferences. As you may remember, we have been having conversations regarding the need for major capital improvements at Camp Capers. This was discussed last year at Council, with the promise that the plans would be further developed for major attention in 2012 and 2013.
45. As you will hear and see during the report from Camps and Conferences, there are exciting plans which include a new Steves Hall, a common gathering area, a new health center, and many site improvements. This is Phase I. Phase II will include such things as a new dining hall and remodeling the current dining hall for meeting space. However, Phase II is down the road a bit. Efforts to move Phase I forward began in 2011, with a goal of \$2,900,000. I am delighted to tell you that we already have commitments in hand for \$1,767,000.
46. This spring, we hope to have commitments for the full \$2,900,000 and we quite possibly may be ready to break ground after this summer's camping season. If this is not possible, we hope to begin in the fall of 2013.
47. The ministry of our Camping and Conferencing programs is second to none, and we reach almost 2,000 individuals per summer through our efforts at Camp Capers, Mustang Island, and our Colorado adventure program. During the September-May portion of the year, both of our camping and conferencing facilities are booked with all kinds of conferences, and these ministries continue to expand year after year.
48. We also have plans to expand our housing capabilities at Mustang Island Conference Center. One of our challenges at MICC is that we have to turn away many groups because we cannot house the number of people that those groups include. Rob Watson will have more details for you on all of these things in the report on Camps and Conferences this afternoon. Exciting times indeed!
49. This year, I am asking that you set aside the 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent (March 25 this year) as **Camp Sunday**. I intend to make this an annual observance. The

purpose of this Sunday is for all of our congregations to learn more about our camping ministries and to invite even more widespread participation than we already currently enjoy.

50. I further request that the offering from this Camp Sunday be dedicated to the Good Samaritan Community Services scholarship fund. Many children are blessed to have the opportunity to attend a summer camp session because of this scholarship fund, and I urge your generosity.
51. I am so hopeful for and about our youth. They are both the future AND the present. I encourage you to ***Abound in Hope*** for and with our young people. As Bishop Reed and I said at our Pre-Council meetings, we want to invest in them, to equip and empower them for ministry and leadership in God's Church – now and in the future.
52. I wish you could see what Bishop Reed and I see when we visit Camp Capers and Mustang Island; when we visit a Happening weekend; when we visit a college Vocare conference; when we serve beside acolytes on Sunday mornings; when we hear our children's choirs sing; when we speak to young people throughout the diocese; when we see the young people who will join us tomorrow morning as our Youth in Action Event begins. We are extremely encouraged and we do indeed ***Abound in Hope***.
53. And speaking of investments in young people, next up: ***Abounding in Hope*** on our college campuses. This area of our common life and ministry is known as Ministry in Higher Education. As I explained at the Pre-Council meetings, the largest single increase in the 2012 diocesan budget is in this area – Youth and Young Adult Ministry including college ministry.
54. Did you know, for example, that there are over 300,000 people attending college within our diocesan borders? That is a stunning number of human beings. I would like us to recommit to this large mission field in our communities.
55. As a person who benefitted from campus ministry while I was in college in this diocese, I know from first hand experience what a blessing it is and what a blessing it can be. It is not an overstatement to say that the college ministry of this diocese deeply formed who I am as a Christian and was no small influence in my call to ordination.
56. This year, we are taking a completely fresh look at our campus ministries – strengths and weaknesses, locations and needed locations, what initiatives seem to be bearing fruit and what initiatives need a fresh look – as we seek to invest in our young people.

57. Ministry in Higher Education is challenging, cutting edge ministry and we need to give it the attention, the thoughtfulness, and the resources that it deserves. A continuing high level of creative engagement is needed to stay on top of these things, and in 2012 we will be intentional as we evaluate what we are doing and what we are being called to do in our ministry with college students.
58. At the Pre-Council meetings, we noted that about 37% of our proposed 2012 Reaching Out budget (approximately \$600,000) is directly tied to ministry with children, youth and young adults within our geographic area. And as I said at the Pre-Council meetings, half or more of these dedicated resources are reaching out to people who are not members of our diocese.
59. For example, of the approximately 1,100 children who attended Camp Capers last year, about 42% were not “members” of our congregations. The campus ministries we envision reach out to college students, not simply Episcopal college students. The diocesan support of Good Samaritan Community Services is specifically outreach for the people in our communities; our neighbors.
60. I believe Christ is proud of our outward, rather than inward, focus. Imagine the possibilities if your congregation’s budget could allocate even 10% of your budget for youth in your community; imagine the possibilities before you with a 30%, 40%, 50% financial investment in our young people. We’d be known as the church that develops, equips, and is committed to young people as they are formed as servant leaders in the image of Christ.
61. Dream big and be creative. Talk to young people about their hopes, their dreams, and their concerns. Talk to your children, grandchildren, and the youth in your congregation about what is important to them.
62. Ask them about such things as unrest across the globe, issues surrounding human sexuality, ways to reach out to the poor, what they see as strengths and weaknesses of the Church; and many other issues which society and the Church are facing now and will continue to face in the years to come.
63. Ask them about the world they see, and the world they hope to see. How, in a world that is both blessed and broken, they view what it means to be the Church, the heart, the hands and the feet of Christ. And about what they need to live it.
64. Next: *Abounding in Hope* in leadership development. Time and time again, we see the critical importance of strong servant leadership – lay and ordained, for the health and vitality of congregations. We have several initiatives underway.

65. One: Clergy. We had an outstanding clergy conference this past October wherein our presenter challenged us to seriously examine our leadership styles and efforts, and called us to deep reflection about issues surrounding leadership. The result of this conference was to initiate (or continue) ongoing discussions and reflections of the traits and practices of effective leadership. I am most encouraged by the seriousness with which the clergy are engaging this conversation in all kinds of ways.
66. Two: Seminarians. The annual seminarian retreat which we began three years ago continues to bear much fruit in the area of clergy formation. Each May, all of our seminarians come together with the examining chaplains to discuss the “many splended thing” we call ordination. The canonical areas required for ordination form the basis of this retreat, but the focus is not on a “content quiz.”
67. Rather, the focus is on how these areas, and especially the seminarians’ growing understanding and appreciation of these areas, are forming each of them to be – in the words of the ordination service – a “more able minister of Christ.” It is an extremely valuable time together for our seminarians, and many of their classmates from other dioceses covet such opportunities.
68. This is an area in which our efforts are being shared with the wider church and there is a growing interest from other dioceses to learn more about what we are doing. Of course, we continue to learn ourselves, and I believe we are all being deepened by the experience.
69. Three: Youth Ministers. In 2012, ten of our youth ministers who are on church staffs will be participating in a year-long coaching program which the diocese is helping to underwrite. This program will address professional growth as well as personal Christian formation. They will be mentored throughout this year by a coach who has been a leader, researcher, and consultant in the area of youth ministry, leadership development, and Christian formation for over 30 years.
70. Four: The Barnabas Project. The Diocese of West Texas has been chosen by the Episcopal Church Foundation to be one of three dioceses across the country to participate in a pilot program dedicated to identifying, shaping, and forming leadership in the coming years. The requirement for clergy participants is that they have been ordained for five years or less.
71. The Barnabas Project includes laity as well. Participating clergy are asked to bring two lay leaders from their congregations with them. This is an opportunity for laity and clergy to work together in focusing on specific ways of encouraging one another and their congregation in Godly leadership formation and Christ-like service as we live in a rapidly changing world.

72. We have about 106 active clergy in the diocese. Do you know how many of those have been ordained less than five years? Twenty-five (25). That is amazing and a cause for all of us to *Abound in Hope*. The Barnabas Project launches for us next month, and we are anxious to partner with the Episcopal Church Foundation in this work.
73. Five: Discernment of vocation. In 2011, I asked the Standing Committee, the Discernment Committee, and the Examining Chaplains to undertake a study of our discernment process, specifically in regard to ordination but also as discernment relates to lay vocations. This has resulted in all kinds of creative conversations which continue into 2012.
74. Discernment is, of course, closely related to Christian formation, and this is naturally closely related to Christian Education. So rather than see discernment as its own distinct area, all of these conversations about formation, leadership development, discernment, and so forth are linked to our overall understanding of Christ-like discipleship.
75. And Christ-like discipleship is the whole point of the enterprise. If we are not forming people to have the mind of Christ; to think about the things Christ thinks about; to care about the things Christ cares about; to do the things that Christ did and continues to do, we are off the mark.
76. So, in these conversations, we are considering what discipleship looks like, what leadership looks like following Christ's own example, and what the diocese and the Church needs in terms of current and future servant leaders.
77. This leads to further and deeper questions such as: What do we mean by "Church" in the first place? Is there just one meaning? How multi-dimensional is it and how do we embody what we believe it is? What are we called to be? To do? To deliver in this world? What shall the delivery system be? How will we measure faithfulness, discipleship, and progress?
78. I encourage all of our congregations to take these questions seriously this year and to look at your congregation's understanding of what it means to be the Church, the Body of Christ, and what the most effective ways might be in living this out.
79. There's a big frontier out there. In one of my first council addresses as your bishop, I recounted the amazing story of the "Chapel Cars" of the 1800's which carried the Gospel to Texas and other westward places as the frontier was being settled.
80. We always have a frontier. Right now, there are many frontiers within the diocesan boundaries. The Eagle Ford Shale oil and gas discoveries are

bringing thousands of people to many areas of the diocese. How shall our congregations respond?

81. The population of South Texas continues to grow, especially in the Latino population. How shall we carry and share the Gospel in light of who lives here?
82. The economic and educational situations in South Texas are a continuous frontier. The ministries of the Good Samaritan Community Services and the Cliff Maus Village in Corpus Christi are two ways of rising to the educational and economic frontiers in front of us.
83. Wouldn't it be great if we had 100% participation from our congregations for these ministries – even if an annual gift of \$25 is all a congregation might be able to do? We'd be making a huge statement as a diocesan family about our overall commitment to working together on the frontiers of our own day.
84. So, just as the Chapel Cars were a creative way to reach expanding numbers of people with the Good News, I encourage you to think about creative ways in which you might reach growing numbers of people in your community with the Good News. This is missional work; this is a description of a missional Church.
85. This is a huge subject and one which we are engaging on many levels, all the time. This is the kind of creative thinking your diocesan leadership is undertaking, and I encourage you to engage the subject in your own life and in the life of your congregation. As we do it, may we always *Abound in Hope*.
86. I hope that I have given you some things to think about this morning; in your own life and in the life of your congregation. In all of this, remember that we are not building the Kingdom – God has already built it. Instead, our role is to build FOR the Kingdom. We don't have the full picture of the Kingdom, but we continue our work as artisans for the Lord.
87. Since 2006, I have chosen an annual theme around which to focus our spiritual formation and our ministry efforts. I have also asked the diocese to read a book or books of the Bible each year. Do you remember the various themes and books?
88. 2006 – **Bound for Glory**; and we read Acts.
89. 2007 – **Let Down Your Nets Into Deep Water**; and we read Luke.
90. 2008 – **Deny Yourself, Take Up Your Cross, and Follow Me**; and we read Matthew.

91. 2009 – **Abide in Me**; and we read Romans.
92. 2010 – **Bear One Another’s Burdens**; and we read Galatians and 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians.
93. 2011 – **A Sower Goes Out To Sow**; and we read Ephesians.
94. And for this year, **Abound in Hope**; and we’ll be reading 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians.
95. As I conclude these remarks, I want to return to where I began and paraphrase a few of the words in William Carlos Williams’ reflection on hope and mix in a few words of my own:
- 96. Yes, there may be a lot to worry about in this life, but there’s also a lot of beauty and goodness around. As people who profess the Christian faith, we have an obligation to hold on to hope. Let’s keep our eyes on what matters, and not lose our ability to smile, to laugh, and to recall just how far we’ve come over the years with God as our guide and Christ as our companion.***
97. Each of us finds hope and inspiration in a variety of ways, places, and words. For me, Godly hope and biblically grounded inspiration are found in a few relatively short, yet powerful and poignant verses from the Gospel of John. You’ve heard them many times.
- 98. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God (1:1)***
- 99. In Christ was life, and the life was the light of all (1:4)***
- 100. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it (1:5)***
- 101. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us (made his dwelling among us) full of grace and truth (1:14)***
- 102. All who received, who believed in his Name; he gave power to become children of God; who were born not of blood nor of the will of the flesh, but of God (1:12)***
103. Amen.