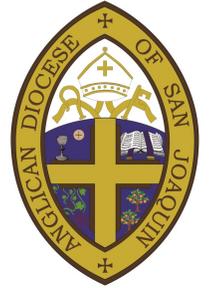


THE SAN JOAQUIN ANGLICAN



The Bishop's Corner—Convention Address

The Right Reverend Eric Vawter Menees

November 2, 2018

St. Luke's, Merced

59th Annual Convention
Anglican Diocese of San Joaquin

State of the Diocese

¹² Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, ¹³ bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. ¹⁴ And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. ¹⁵ And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. ¹⁷ And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. (*Colossians 3:12-17*)

Reverend clergy, convention delegates, brothers and sisters of the Anglican Diocese of San Joaquin greetings to you in the mighty name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

Welcome to the 59th Annual Convention of the Diocese of San Joaquin! We are being hosted this year by the good people of St. Luke's, Merced, as well as our brothers and sisters in Christ here at Central Presbyterian, we are so grateful for your hospitality.

Friends, I so very much appreciate your going to the time, expense and trouble of coming to Convention because this is the one time a year when we gather together as the Diocese. We are not independent congregational churches with loose affiliations.

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BISHOP'S SCHEDULE AND DIOCESAN CALENDAR

November 10—Sierra Deanery Confirmation Service, Christ the King Anglican Church @ 201 W. Graaf Ave, Ridgecrest

November 11—Bishop @ St. Jude's, Tehachapi

November 12—Diocesan Office Closed for Veteran's Day

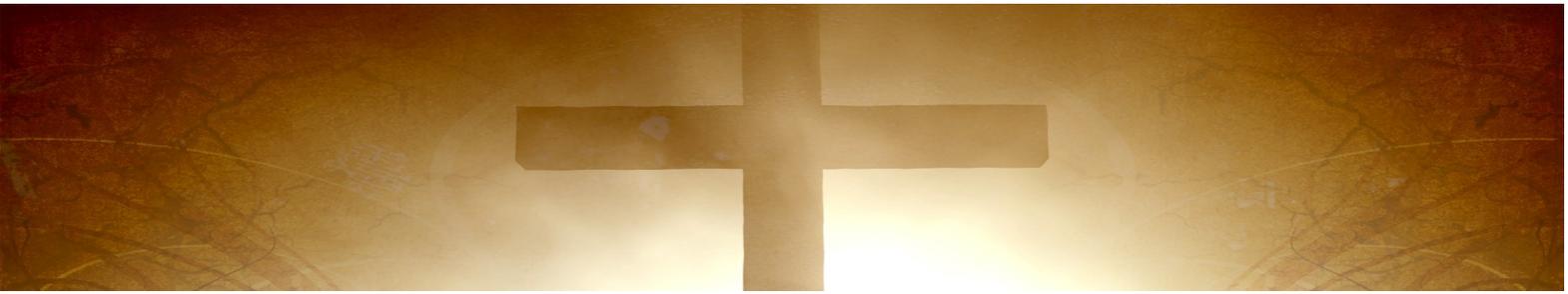
November 13-15—Bishop @ FIF-NA Meeting

November 21—Diocesan Office Closes at Noon

November 22—Diocesan Office Closed for Thanksgiving Day

November 23—Diocesan Office Closed

November 26-28—Clergy Retreat



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We are bound together as a family, and though separated by some distance, the importance of renewing those bonds as Anglican Christians linked together with a common faith, practice and governance cannot be overstated. And so, we gather to worship together, to fellowship together, to study the word of God together and to take care of the business of the diocese.

Since the loss of our properties we've had to be flexible about our meeting place. Last year, we met at University Square Hotel in Fresno, and while the convention was a success, the meeting place was an unmitigated disaster!

This year, we're trying something a little different with a one-day convention that is heavily weighted on business. Following convention, we'll again review how this worked and decide whether or not we want to adopt this model, the old model or a modification of the two.

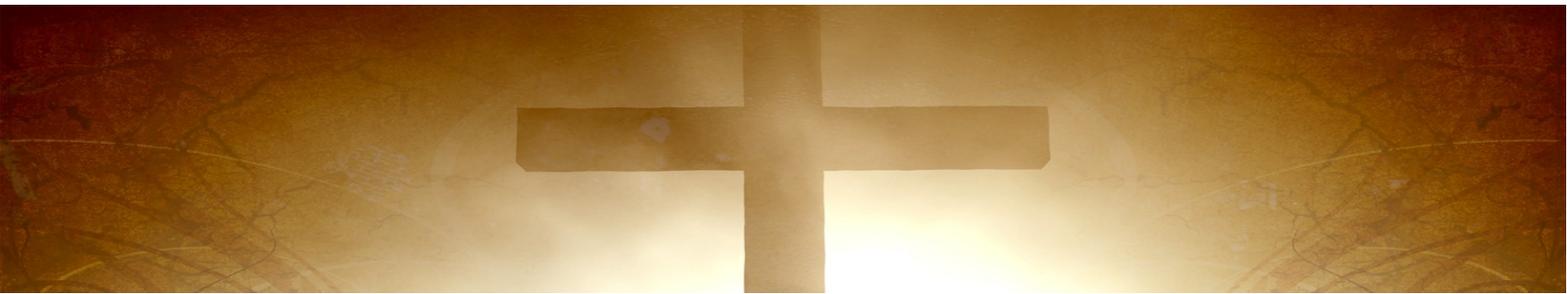
Since we met last at the 58th Annual Convention much has occurred... Allow me to give a brief update regarding people and events.

CLERGY

We've had several clergy make transitions:

- On March 11th I had the good pleasure of installing **Fr. Ron Ryan** as Vicar at St. Peter's, Kernville.
- With Fr. Ryan's instillation, **Deacon Tom Hunt** officially retired and stepped down as Deacon-In-Charge, though as his health permits, Dcn. Tom still serve at St. Peter's.
- September 1st, we welcomed **Fr. Joshua Elijah Drake** and his family as Rector of St. Francis, Stockton. Fr. Josh and Alicia immediate began growing their congregation with the birth of their third child, **Caleb Elijah Drake**. I was blessed to baptize Caleb and install Fr. Joshua as Rector on the same day.
- **Fr. Woodrow Gubuan** has transitioned from Interim Vicar at St. Francis to Interim Vicar at Jesus Our Savior, Modesto. I am greatly appreciative of Fr. Gubuan's ministry.
- **Fr. Joe Lawrence** moved last summer accepting a position in the Diocese of South Carolina.
- **Dcn. Ted Thurber** was ordained to the Sacred Order of Deacons in May. Dcn. Thurber is serving at Our Lady of Guadalupe. I want to welcome Dcn. Thurber to his first Diocesan Convention!
- **Fr. Ron Longero** and Christ Church, Reno, have left the Diocese and been received into the Western Rite of the Orthodox Church.
- **Fr. Jim Sweeney** while serving as Curate at St. David's, San Rafael, has also accepted a position at Pacific Bay Christian School in San Francisco. As a result, Fr. Sweeney, trying to maintain his sanity, has stepped down as one of our Chancellors.
- **Fr. Ian Burgess** has accepted a call to serve as a hospital chaplain in Tucson, AZ.
- **Fr. Derek Thomason** became full-time chaplain at Clovis Community Hospital and transferred into the Diocese of the Armed Forces and Chaplaincy.
- Good Shepherd, Reedley, and St. Mary's, Fresno merged together and to form Holy Cross, Sanger. **Fr. Michael Sclafani** is Rector of Holy Cross and **Dcn. Melinda Barrow** joins **Dcn. Jane Williams** on staff.

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- Lastly, this past May, I celebrated the Requiem Masses for **Fr. John Combs**, in Los Banos, and **Dcn. Arlen Neckels**, in Sonora. Please continue to pray for Ann Combs and Maggie Neckels as they grieve. Fr. Combs was ordained for forty-one years and served St. Alban's for nineteen of those years. Dcn. Neckels was ordained in the diocese and served for sixteen years ---- they are both greatly missed! May their souls and all the souls of the faithfully departed rest in peace!

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

We are also in the midst of transition in the Bishop's Office.

- Having long battled cancer and undergone many surgeries, our beloved **Carol Gill** decided that it was time to take a medical retirement. In January, we hired **Virginia Gottlieb** as our part-time Diocesan Bookkeeper.
- **Corey McLaughlin**, my intrepid administrator, is also transitioning out of Fresno and up to Sacramento to join his wife, Natalie, who has been accepted into a doctoral program at UC Davis. Corey will be greatly missed and I am extremely appreciative of his ministry, the vast majority of which goes un-noticed and un-sung!
- I am pleased to announce that **Fr. Phil Berghius** has accepted a call to take over as Diocesan Administrator beginning December 3rd. In addition to his ministry at the Bishop's Office, Fr. Phil will continue assisting at St. Columba Church.
- **Raul Villa** – our part-time receptionist and “go to” IT man continues to do an outstanding job juggling several tasks: – working for the Bishop's Office, Our Lady of Guadalupe and St. James, Fresno. Still, with all this on his plate, no matter what is asked of him, he always steps up and does an excellent job!
- **David Francis** – our essentially full-time – volunteer Treasurer – continues to serve and provide extremely valuable ministry to me personally and the diocese as a whole. As a result of his hard work, counsel and advice we continue to be good stewards of God's provision – and continue to be in the black.
- **Rusty Van Rozeboom & Kevin Gunner** - continue to serve as our outstanding chancellors volunteering their time and expertise. Words cannot express my gratitude for the numerous hours that they work on behalf of the diocese.

Can we take a moment and recognize the staff of the Office of the Bishop? (Round of applause)

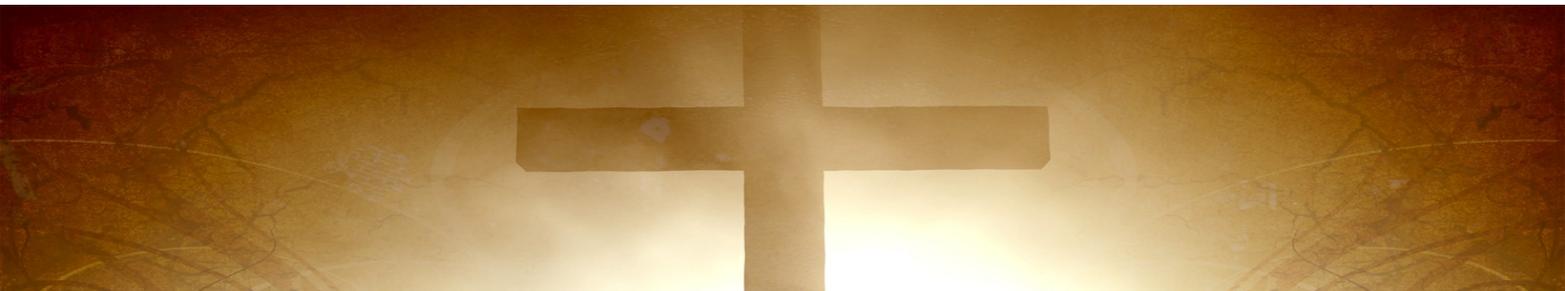
LEGAL UPDATE

While this has been a relatively quiet year, the Diocese the Episcopal Church continues in their law suits - specifically against St. Columba who is currently in the middle of their trial. Please keep St. Columba in your prayers.

This year St. Timothy's, Bishop and St. Mary's, Fresno were required to step away from their properties as TEC sold them. Thanks be to God, they have both landed well. St. Timothy's has stayed in the same location and is simply renting from the folks who purchased the building and St. Mary's, now Holy Cross, is renting from St. Mary's Catholic Church in Sanger.

There are nine congregations still in their facilities and awaiting word from the Episcopal Church.

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PROGRESS MADE

There are several things to report on God's blessings this year.

- **Constitution and Canons** – Two years ago I announced the re-formation of the Task Force on Constitution and Canons. I asked them to re-examine the Constitution and Canons, post litigation, using a particular lens, by asking these questions of each Article and Canon...

1. Does this assist or hinder ministry in the Diocese of San Joaquin?
2. Does it line up with the Canons & Constitution of the Anglican Church In North America?
3. Does it make sense at this time in the life of the Diocese of San Joaquin?
4. What are the structures like in the rest of the ACNA and what can we learn from them?

The Task Force completed their examination and made their recommendations to convention last year for a first reading. The constitutional amendments were passed but require a second vote for ratification. Those will be presented a little later today. The recommendations for changes to the canons were distributed last year at convention but they required the amendments to the constitution so no vote was taken. A vote on the canons will immediately follow the vote on the constitution, assuming ratification. We've now had an entire year to examine the proposed changes. Both the constitutional and canonical changes were presented at the pre-convention deanery meetings. Delegates have had ample opportunities to raise questions and talk over the changes. For that reason, both the constitutional amendments and the canonical changes, will be presented in their entirety for an up or down vote.

- **Retreats and Trainings** – This year we have continued our offerings of discipleship training and retreats.
 - A. Last year I announced the formation of the **Anglican Catechist Training School (ACTS)**. ACTS graduated eight people, seven of whom have chosen to serve as catechists and one who will be ordained a deacon in December. A second class began in September and there are seven students in that class.
 - B. **Anglican Fourth Day** – is a retreat that focuses on lay ministry and discipleship, specifically helping people to “Make a Friend, Be a Friend, Bring a Friend to Christ!”
 - C. **Vestry Retreat** – where we invited congregations to bring their leadership up the mountain to focus on Jesus' teaching on discipleship through the Lord's Prayer.
 - D. **Clergy Retreat and Clergy Conference** which focused on Spiritual Direction and Spiritual Formation.
 - E. **Bishop's Spring Gathering of the Daughters** where I met with the Daughters of the Holy Cross across the diocese and we spoke about the Rule of Life.
 - F. **Bishop's Teaching in the Deaneries** where I met clergy and laity in the Delta, Yosemite, and Kern Deaneries in addition to meeting with the clergy in Fresno and Sequoia deaneries. I'll be in the Sierra Deanery next week.
 - G. **Youth Trip to Mexico** with Amor ministries. With the transitions and changes, we were not able hold a traditional youth camp this past summer, so we joined forces in the Kern Deanery and went to the border region of Mexico to work.

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- H. **Area Confirmations** – In each deanery it has been my honor to do area confirmations. This has had the benefit of gathering larger numbers of people being confirmed together.
- I. **All the Above** – has been offered in accordance with our diocesan Mission to “Call and Equip Laity and Clergy to Bring People to, and Disciple them in, a Saving Relationship with Jesus Christ!”

CHALLENGES AHEAD –

Of course, in the midst of transitions and changes across the diocese, we have had losses. At last year’s convention, I shared that, for too long, our diocese has been in a slow decline and I shared the statistics from the 2015 & 2016 parochial reports. I’m sorry to say that the downward trend continued in 2017. As we examine our Parochial Report for 2017 in comparison to 2016, we have to acknowledge significant drops.

The most significant decline came as a direct result of clergy misconduct on the part of two of our priests, both of whom were removed from ministry as a consequence to their actions.

I am grateful for the ministries of Fr. Woodrow Gubuan and Fr. Carl Johnson who reached out to Deacon Daniel Park and the lay leadership at St. Anselm, Elk Grove. However, after several months of trying to make it work and after a good deal of prayer and discussion, the congregation decided to close her doors and merge in with surrounding congregations.

The second congregation, Our Lady of Guadalupe, continues to meet, worship and minister in the community. For this season, I am acting as her interim pastor. However, there is no way Our Lady of Guadalupe could continue without the ministry of Deacon Thurber and the truly gifted and dedicated lay leaders – three of whom served as lay ministers in this morning’s Convention Eucharist. Still the attendance at Our Lady went from over 500 on an Average Sunday to our current level of 120.

Allow me to share some statistics with you – Loss

- In 2016 our Average Sunday Attendance (ASA) was 2,811. In 2017 our ASA was 2,301 – 510 less. (If we take Our Lady of Guadalupe out of that mix, the drop in Average Sunday Attendance is 89)
- In 2016 we baptized 91 people. In 2017 we baptized 74 – 17 less.
- In 2016 I confirmed 88 people. In 2017 I confirmed 43 or 45 less than in 2016.

These statistics can be interpreted in several ways, and whether we include or exclude Our Lady of Guadalupe, there is no question but that we are in decline. I am not saying that the “sky is falling” but I am saying we need to be realistic about where we are.

I’d like to say that our decline is a direct result of our disaffiliation and the confiscation of our properties (and clearly, there is no question that this has played a major part in our decline or stagnation) however, the Diocese of San Joaquin has been in a gradual decline for some years prior to our disaffiliation.

Two errors in thinking have occurred: it’s been reported to me, through multiple sources, that the rank and file in the Episcopal Church thought that once the court decisions were rendered, that people would come flocking back to TEC. They didn’t understand that our stance was not political or emotional; it was and is theological and born of conscience.

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The second error in thinking has been on our part. Many of us had assumed that once we stepped away from TEC then people would come flocking to our churches. We assumed that once free from the fog of heresy that hangs over TEC, people would recognize the light of the gospel that we bear and would be drawn like a moth to the flame.

In fact, I think we've served a great purpose to the wider church by acting as a lighthouse. But remember, a lighthouse does not attract ships to come to the lighthouse, it warns mariners away from the rocky shoals. We in the Diocese of San Joaquin have done a terrific job of pointing out the rocky shoals of false teaching and heresy.

However, we need to re-dedicate ourselves to proclaiming and living the Good News of Jesus Christ. Never has the time been more important to share the gospel than now, not for the sake of our churches, but for the sake of the souls who are lost – the majority of whom don't even know it – lost because they look for truth and meaning within themselves – and within material things and positions. In reality, Truth and meaning find themselves rooted in the only one who is the Truth – Jesus Christ – who himself proclaimed **“I am the way the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”** (John 14:6)

Brothers and sisters, we must recognize that we live in a post-Christian world that greatly resembles the first century. How did the first century church reach the world? By speaking into it not retreating from it! By living lives worth imitating and not imitating lives that are conformed to the world.

I began this address by reading from St. Paul's letter to the church in Colossae. St. Paul implored the people, then and now, to live lives that were counter cultural – not self-absorbed, not devoted to personal pleasure, not seeking answers within. No, St. Paul lays out three important things in that passage:

- First, St. Paul lists the Christian Virtues that we are to “put on”, like a comfortable set of clothes. Hear once again what St. Paul wrote: **Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, ¹³ bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. ¹⁴ And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.**
- Second, St. Paul implores us to place ourselves under the authority of the Word of God. **¹⁶ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.**
- Third, St. Paul advises: **¹⁷ And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.** (Colossians 3:12-17)

Now, I realize that I'm speaking to mature Christians – this is nothing new.

The question is – how are we taking this outside to the world around us? If we continue to do the same thing year in and year out and expect a different result, we will be sadly disappointed. This is not to say that we do not continue to care for the people within our congregations, to disciple, pastor and lead them – we do. But more than that we must equip them for the work of ministry. To the laity, I say the days of running our churches under a “Father knows best” mentality have got to end. This is to say, we've got to let go of the idea that our priest or deacon are the only “real” ministers. Or even worse, the idea that we don't have to do anything because, “well, that's what we pay Father for.”

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To the clergy I remind you that we are called to fulfill the words of St. Paul to the Ephesians... our mission is to: “¹² ... equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,¹⁴ so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.” (Ephesians 4:12-14)

What can we do that is different – that can spark a fire in our community and in our congregations? Allow me to give a few examples:

Petaluma

For some time, Fr. David Miller and the people St. John’s, Petaluma have intentionally decided to act ecumenically with the churches in Petaluma. Whether it’s working with local congregations teaming together for youth ministry through AWANA or gathering to work together in rebuilding after the North Bay Fires or working with missionaries in Uganda, the people of St. John’s regularly work with Roman Catholics, Baptists and evangelicals of several different faiths and colors. This has provided an energy and enthusiasm in St. John’s which, is demonstrated by people regularly inviting people to St. John’s for worship and ministry. I loved learning recently that Fr. Miller was asked to preach at a large Baptist Church on the sacrament of Holy Communion!

Oakdale

Almost two years ago, Fr. John Roberts at St. Matthias, with the support of his vestry, publicized in the community that he would be holding a class he entitled “Adam & Eve & Evolution.” This class was intended to be provocative - he got his local paper to publicize it through an article, not an advertisement. The turn out from the community was impressive. But here’s the thing, he simultaneously equipped his lay leaders to form Life Groups in the congregation. While this did not bring in 1000 new members, or even 100, it provided a spark that continues to ignite in St. Matthias. When I last visited, it was clearly a different church than it was four years ago. The Life Groups are going well, there is an air of excitement, new people in the pews and new people stepping up into leadership.

Los Banos

Currently, Fr. Noah Lawson and the people of St. Alban’s, Los Banos, are embarking on an exciting journey. This small church has a vision of establishing a Christian Coffee House to be known as SAC – St. Alban’s Center. The dream is to open a Coffee House that will provide some much-needed income to St. Alban’s but most importantly it will provide a platform to reach the community, provide space for St. Alban’s to worship in, provide employment for a few people, and provide space for non-profit organizations in Los Banos to work together. They have located a terrific space that is perfectly situated in the city and they are seeking investors to enter into a lease to own relationship or to buy the building outright.

Bakersfield

This summer St. Luke’s, All Saints and Trinity, Bakersfield pooled their resources and received a matching grant from Diocesan Council to hire a Youth Minister to work with the youth of all three congregations forming a joint youth group. This is an exciting and logical way to support one another and work collaboratively!

These are just a few examples, around the diocese, of not simply doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result.

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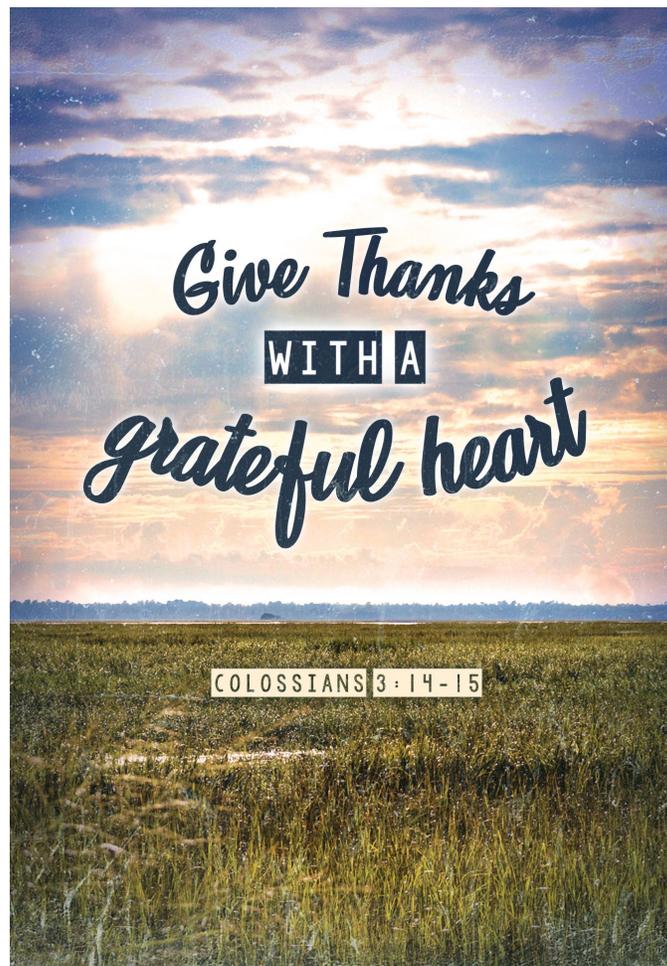


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Of course, on a diocesan level, we'll continue to offer the Anglican Catechist Training School, Vestry Retreat, Anglican 4th Day weekend, Amor Ministries youth mission, along with the clergy retreat and conference. But in addition, I'm looking at organizing the newly equipped Catechists to bring an inhouse retreat to your congregation. This lay team will work with the local congregation to offer a Friday night to Sunday morning retreat for the congregation as a way to model lay leadership and inspire lay men and women to step up into ministry as well. More information will be coming out shortly about this. In the meantime, please pray about the possibility of your congregation hosting just such a team.

All of this is to say that we need to change our mindset when it comes to how we engage the community around us. The whole idea behind the constitutional amendments and canonical changes that we are addressing at this convention today is to step away from a bureaucratic, top down, mindset and foster a creative and entrepreneurial spirit in our congregations.

Friends, there is no question that we have been through some battles and there will be more ahead. However, there is also no question that each week the Lord offers us opportunities to reach out into our communities – with the life changing and life-giving love of Jesus Christ! I pray that as leaders in our congregations and across the diocese, we will embrace the challenge of stepping out in faith. And to that I say... AMEN!





AN EXCERPT FROM
REFLECTIONS FROM
THE FORMER ARCHDEACON
BY THE VEN. DONALD A. SEEKS

GOD'S OWNERSHIP

A famous English scientist once suggested to a clergyman that in a universe containing millions of planets, it was inevitable that life would appear by chance on one of them. The priest responded, "Sir, if Scotland Yard found a body in your closet, would you tell them, 'There are millions of closets in the world – surely one of them must contain a body'? I think they still would want to know who put it there."

Christians have no doubts about Who put life on this earth, or even Who created all the other planets. An even greater act of faith for each of us begins with the realization that we are NOT God. Awareness continues as we discover more ways to turn our former idol, the self, from self-centeredness, which is the seat and root of all trouble, into God-centeredness, where true life is to be found.

Recently, I heard about a cowboy who applied for health insurance. The agent routinely inquired as to whether the man had suffered any accidents the previous year. The cowboy replied, "No, but I was bitten by a rattlesnake, and a horse kicked me in the ribs. That one laid me up for a while."

The agent said, "Why, weren't those accidents?" "No", answered the cowboy, "they did it on purpose". He realized for him, there really are no such things as "accidents." And how much more should a person have the same attitude about the sovereignty of God. "In the beginning, God made...", and His creative activity has been going on ever since. Not all believe this.

Each time I hear of the (late) Carl Sagan who was struggling with all the complexities of the universe and all the way down to genes and chromosomes, I wonder how he could have thought it all came together by an explosion. The late Robert Jastrow, another scientist, who declared himself as an agnostic, admitted in an article, "Science cannot find out what the explanation is" (for the origin of the universe). This is an exceedingly strange development, unexpected by all but the theologians. "They have always accepted the word of the Bible: 'In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth...'"

For the scientist who has lived by his faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream. He has scaled the mountains of ignorance, he is about to conquer the highest peak; as he pulls himself over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries.

What's more, God does not hesitate to claim His sovereignty over that which He has made. Throughout Holy Scripture, His rightful ownership is claimed. In the 25th Chapter of Leviticus, God tells His people: "The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine; for you are strangers and sojourners with me." In other words, God claims ownership and we are temporary tenants. In I Chronicles, we find that great acknowledgment of God's sovereignty by King David was often used in worship:

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AN EXCERPT FROM
REFLECTIONS FROM
THE FORMER ARCHDEACON
BY THE VEN. DONALD A. SEEKS

(Continued from page 9)

“Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty; for ALL that is in the heavens and the earth is THINE; Thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and Thou are exalted as Head Above All.” David again is quoted as the Psalmist when he declares, “The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof, the world, and THOSE WHO DWELL WITHIN...” In Psalm 50: “the Mighty One, God the Lord, speaks (saying), for every beast of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills. I know the birds of the air and all that moves in the field is mine ...for the world and ALL that is in it is mine.” God claims all the wealth of the world through His prophet Haggai: “The silver is mine and the gold is mine,” says the Lord of Hosts. Through His prophet Isaiah, His ownership of all people: “Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine...everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.” The theme of divine ownership is carried on in the New Testament as St. Peter stands before the Sanhedrin and boldly proclaims his faith in the risen Christ.

And after release, the new company of believers pray, “Sovereign Lord, who didst make the heaven and the earth and the sea, AND EVERYTHING IN THEM...”. Yet despite all this evidence, some still claim to be their own person and not responsible to anyone other than themselves.

We all were like that once, and that is why Jesus came to die for us, to free us from our sins which separate us from our Father, and through Christ’s sacrifice allow us to be restored as God’s own once again. Therefore, St. Paul declares to the Corinthians and thereby to each of us: “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? You are not your own; you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.”

With all this evidence before us, we can only reflect in awe. It tells us that God made, owns, supports, and sustains all of Creation, which includes your life and mine. God does not need anything to help, support, or subsidize Him because He already has it all.

Scientific degrees and awards, theological treatises and pronouncements notwithstanding, there is no clearer way for a person to demonstrate his or her sinfulness and ignorance than to try to live with the illusion that anything on this earth really belongs to us, or “just happened” by accident, or by random selection. In contrast, there is no more soundness and maturity and truth than in our acknowledgement that “Thine is the Kingdom, O Lord, and Thou are exalted as Head above all.”



17th Annual ~ Christ Church Anglican



Saturday
November 10, 2018
9:00 am - 3:00 pm

MOST CREDIT CARDS ACCEPTED

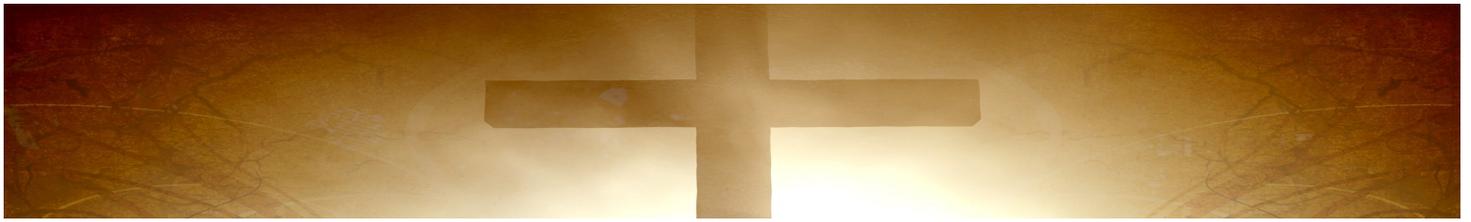
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Bishop's Note series--

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Please send these to akr93555@gmail.com and cc: melody@ctkridgecrest.org

Thank you!