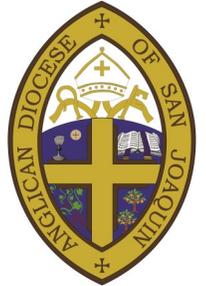


THE SAN JOAQUIN ANGLICAN



The Bishop's Corner

The Right Reverend Eric Vawter Menees

Dear Friends,

This is a time in our country when it's incredibly easy to not see the forest for the trees. There are so many ugly things rearing their heads – the pandemic, social unrest, a contentious election, business closures – that it is hard to see the bigger picture. As Christians when we look at everything going on today, these events are not isolated incidents; they are all connected.

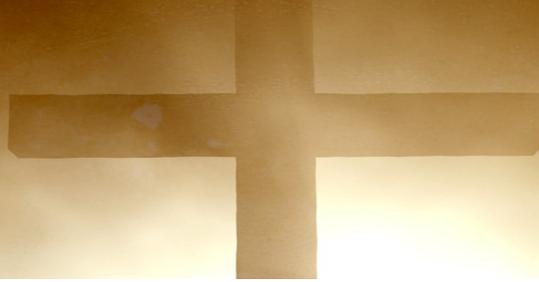
Years ago, after the Sandy Hook shooting, a bishop in another church said that as soon as he heard about the shooting, he called the pastor of the congregation in Newtown and got in his car to go there. On the way he needed gas and when he walked into the gas station, the teenage girl working as a cashier was crying as she watched the news coverage of the shooting. When she saw him and noticed he was clergy, she asked, "Why would someone do this?" and the bishop's response was, "I don't know."

Pastorally, in the moment, this might have been an acceptable answer since it's difficult to know what motivated the shooter. However, I can say unequivocally that the bishop told the young woman the wrong answer. Saying we don't know why things like this happen means we have no clue why there is evil in the world or why bad things happen. As Christians we do know why! It all stretches back to the

(Continued on page 2)

BISHOP'S SCHEDULE AND DIOCESAN CALENDAR

- December 8 - 10 am - Rural Deans
- December 9 - 10:30 am - Diocesan Clergy Meeting on Zoom
- December 12 - Commission on Ministry Meeting
- December 13 - Bishop at Church of Epiphany, Corcoran
- December 15 - Northern & Central Deanery Clericuses
- December 16, 18, & 19 - Ember Days
- December 19 - 10 am - Standing Committee
- December 20 - Bishop at Holy Cross, Sanger
- December 23 - East West Deanery Clericus
- December 24-28 - Diocesan Office Closed
- December 25 - Christmas Day
- December 27 - Bishop at Christ Church, Reno
- December 30 - 10:30 am - Diocesan Clergy Meeting on Zoom
- December 31 - January 1 - Diocesan Office Closed



fall of Adam and Eve in the garden when they made the decision to eat the forbidden fruit, contravening God's commandment and humanity fell into sin. Before the fall humanity COULD sin, but after the fall, we can't NOT sin – we're GOING to sin! Before the fall, humanity lived a life of intimacy with God; after the fall humanity was separated from God and experienced death, physically and spiritually.

The fall didn't only impact humanity – the fall impacted ALL of creation. What that means is that creation is in a sense broken and flawed. In the same way that death entered humanity, death entered creation as well.

Despite what some people say, not everything natural is good. Yes, there is a lot of beauty in nature, but nature also gives us disease and disasters. This is part of the reason why the renunciations at baptism are to renounce the devil and the flesh and the world as well. The important thing to remember is that by the fall of humanity, death and sin entered into the world. In other words, God created the world and it was good; but because of the fall, God's original intentions of good are not what we experience in our world today.

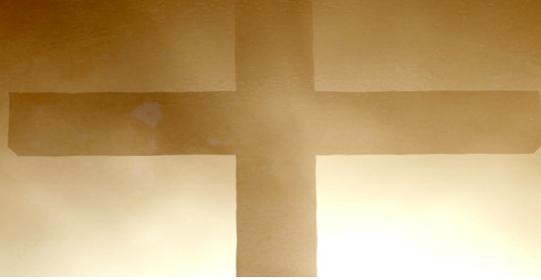
Everything we experience in our lives falls short of the goodness that God intended for humanity and the world and resulted in separation from God. This separation is a result of the original fall. In some ways it's almost like a line of dominoes falling down – we can see that with so many of the things going wrong in society today. Indeed, so many of the struggles we're now facing are a result of people's injustice and men and women not loving their neighbors the way God intended.

Now this is not saying we as Christians can ignore these things or just expect God to fix them for us. Instead, as part of expanding the kingdom of God, we should strive to work in ways to fix the problems in creation. Christ calls us to be peacemakers, to reach out where there's discord and anger, and draw people together. We can even work towards repairing our fallen creation. In fact, diseases like viruses are a result of the fall and death that entered the world, and for centuries the church has championed Christians to care for the sick in time of plague.

While we can and should work to deal with these problems, we need to remember that ultimately, we can't fix all of them. We may work to heal people, but we can't remove death from the world. We can work with the homeless and the needy, but as Jesus says, "the poor you will always have with you." The good news, quite literally the good news, is that those things we can't fix are the very things that Jesus did in his passion, death, and resurrection. Yes, Jesus died for our sins as individuals and reminds us in John 6:51, "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

When we look at all the sorrow, pain, and despair in the world, we can honestly say we know why it's happening – the falling away of humanity resulted in all of creation falling away from God. We should strive to work alongside God in drawing creation back to him: We should reach out as peacemakers and love our neighbors. We know that ultimately only God can bring about the full reconciliation of each of us and the world we live in today. In the midst of our struggles we can be comforted by the knowledge that Jesus Christ HAS brought about that reconciliation.

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The story of salvation is still playing out and we have a role to play. It's good to know that the ultimate victory is already won! When you or your friends and family get stressed out this year, when you start to despair and wonder why things are happening the way they are, turn to scripture. Remember the good news of Jesus Christ, and remember that God has been at work since the beginning of creation to restore life to the world. In scripture St. Paul reminds us:

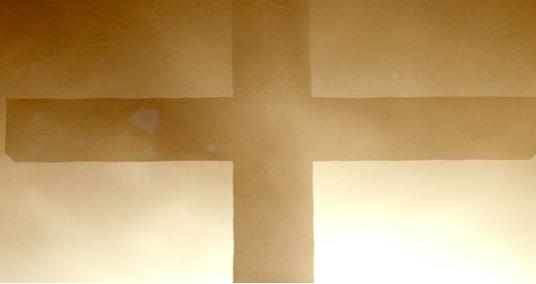
“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” – 2 Corinthians 5:17-21

I pray you all a truly blessed Advent as we prepare to celebrate the Incarnation and await our Lord's Second Coming!

Transitions

- ◆ Congratulations to **Fr. Fabian** and **Charity Pering** on the birth of their first child, **Malachi Abner Pering**, on November 21st!
- ◆ Sadly, on November 25th, **Fr. Jerry Roberts** passed into God's loving arms. Please continue to keep Karen Roberts and the family in your prayers.





Diocesan Convention Address 2020

61st Annual Convention
Anglican Diocese of San Joaquin
State of the Diocese



Bp. Eric Vawter Menees
November 6, 2020
Virtual Presentation

“He said to them, “But who do you say that I am? Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.” – Matthew 16:15-16

My dear friends, reverend clergy, convention delegates, brothers and sisters of the Anglican Diocese of San Joaquin, and all of you viewing from home - greetings to you in the mighty name of Jesus, who is the Christ, the Son of the Living God!

Welcome to the 61st Annual Convention of the Diocese of San Joaquin. Of course, this convention is different than any other one. I am addressing you today from St. James Chapel in Fresno, but you are gathered from all around the diocese and beyond. We meet this morning through the gift of technology that allows us to gather virtually, if not in person.

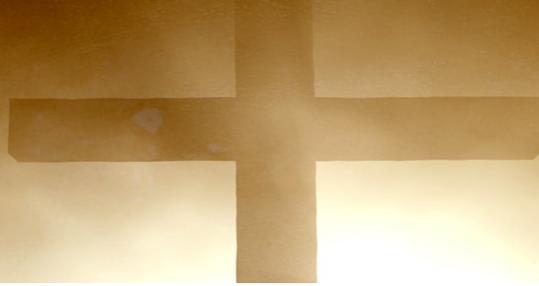
Of course, this is all due to the fact that we are living in the midst of a worldwide pandemic. We face an enemy that is unseen and is spread in aerosolized droplets by both healthy and unwell alike. As a result, health requirements necessitate that we not gather in large crowds in tight spaces so as to ensure that we do not, unwittingly, spread the virus – and thus our convention this year is like none other in the past.

I am disappointed not to be meeting in person at St. Luke’s, Merced as we had planned. Every year I really look forward to celebrating Holy Eucharist, singing and worshipping the Lord together, celebrating the successes of the previous year and mourning our losses. But alas that is not to be this year; however, God willing the scourge of this virus will be lifted by next year and we’ll gather together then.

Still, we are bound together as a family and though separated by many miles, we recognize the importance of renewing our bonds as Anglican Christians, linked together with a common faith. Our practice as Christians and governance cannot be overstated. And so, we gather virtually this year to worship together, to study the Word of God, and to take care of the business of the diocese.

Since we met last at the 60th annual Convention much has occurred. Allow me to give a brief update regarding people and events.

(Continued on page 5)



CLERGY

On Pentecost Sunday, May 5th, I was privileged and honored to ordain the **Reverend Anthony Velez** to the Sacred Order of Deacons. Deacon Anthony is serving at St. James, Fresno, and assisting at Holy Cross, Sanger. I look forward to ordaining him to the priesthood this coming December.

On September 6th, I was privileged and honored to ordain the **Reverend Stephen Braun** to the Sacred Order of Priests. Father Braun continues serving at Trinity Anglican Church, Bakersfield. We rejoice with Fr. Steve and his wife Lydia who gave birth to their fourth child, **Abigail Phoebe Braun**, on June 26th.

On March 15, **Fr. Robert Longbottom** took the helm as Rector at St. Paul's, Visalia, though because of COVID 19, I was not able to officially install him until last month in a really terrific service in a seriously nice barn.

On August 1th, **Fr. Fabian Pering** took over as Rector at Christ the King, Ridgecrest. I look forward to his installation as rector in a few weeks. And I bid your prayers for Fr. Fabian and his wife Charity as they await the birth of their first child at the end of the month.

I am especially grateful for the ministry of **Fr. Richard Menees** who served as Interim Rector at Christ the King, and just last month began his ministry as Interim Rector at Christ Church, Lemoore, while we search for a new rector. In addition, last month Fr. Richard formally transferred his canonical residence into the diocese and we're thrilled to have him.

Of course, Christ Church, Lemoore is open because **Fr. Aaron Prosser** received a call to the diocese of Pittsburgh. And, just a couple of weeks ago we bid Godspeed to **Fr. Michael Sclafani** who, due to health reasons had to leave the diocese. We pray the Sclafani family good health and every blessing in North Carolina their new home.

This past year we've had three clergy retirements. In March **Fr. Richard James** retired from St. Paul's, Visalia, though he continues to work on their building project. God willing and the creek don't rise we'll be consecrating their new facilities before too long. In addition to his continued ministry at St. Paul's, Fr. James has agreed to assist me and the diocese with congregations in transition.

In September **Deacon Jane Williams** retired from Holy Cross, Sanger, having celebrated her 80th birthday, and deciding she wanted some time to herself... Can you imagine?

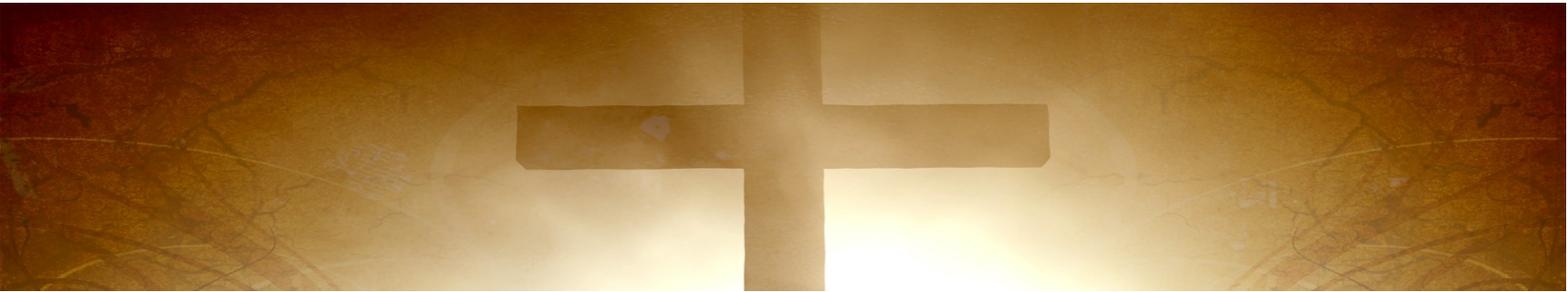
And just last Sunday, **Fr. Michael Law** retired from St. John's, Porterville. Fr. Mike and Suzanne are moving to Idaho to be with their children and grandchildren.

As a result of Fr. Law's move, **Fr. Jim Rouse** has stepped into the position as Interim Rector and we have merged together St. James, Lindsay with St. John's, Porterville.

In July **Fr. Jim Snell** and **Fr. Townsend Waddill** switched chairs – Fr. Waddill is now the Rector at St. Columba, Fresno, and Fr. Snell is the Associate Rector.



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And, lastly, we bid farewell and placed into God's loving arms **Fr. Don Seeks** in November, **Fr. Tom Upton** in December, **Fr. John Wilcox** in August and **Fr. Jack Faucett** in September. Fathers Seeks, Upton and Wilcox joined their wives in heaven, metaphorically speaking. Please continue to pray for **Joan Faucett** and her family as they grieve the death of Fr. Jack.



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

While, we've experienced a good deal of transition throughout the diocese I'm blessed that we've been stable in the Office of the Bishop even if we are working remotely. **Fr. Phil Berghuis, Raul Villa** and **Virginia Gottlieb** are incredibly hard working and talented. Raul Villa, our intrepid director of Information Technology deserves a special shout-out as we've been forced to use technology in ways that we've never had to use before. On each and every occasion he has stepped up to the plate and hit a home run.

Added to my staff this year are **Fr. Richard James**, as I mentioned before, and **Ms. Beth Conkle** our Director of the Anglican Catechists Training School. Beth and her team have put together a catechist training program that is the envy of much of the province.

Thankfully, we continue to be blessed by the ministry of **Mr. David Francis** who continues to serve as our Diocesan Treasurer. As a result of his hard work, and leadership, along with that of the Standing Committee we continue to be good stewards of God's provision – and continue to operate in the black.

Thanks be to God **Rusty Van Rozeboom, Kevin Gunner**, and **Fr. Jim Sweeney** continue to serve as our outstanding chancellors, volunteering their time and expertise.

I am so blessed to have such a talented team of professionals supporting me! When you see them next, please take the time to say thank you for their hard work.

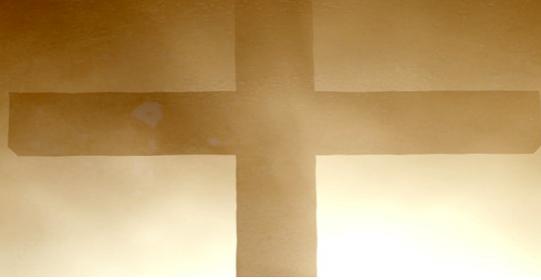
LEGAL UPDATE

Legally, with regards to the Episcopal Church there is really nothing new to announce. As I've mentioned before the speed of the fulfillment of the judgment against us is all in the hands of the Episcopal Church. In the meantime, we'll simply continue to love the Lord while advancing His Kingdom throughout the Diocese of San Joaquin.

Last year, I shared that as a result of clergy misconduct, I had turned the case of Antonio Castaneda over to the Fresno Police Department. That case is slowly, very slowly, making its way through the criminal justice system with the next hearing scheduled for January.

Last year, convention pared down our six deaneries to four with **Fr. John Roberts** as dean for the Northern Deanery, **Fr. Gordon Kamai** as dean for the East/West Deanery, **Fr. Carlos Raines** as dean for the Central Deanery, and **Fr. Karl Dietze** as dean of the Southern Deanery. This past month **Fr. Raines** retired as dean.

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I cannot say thank you enough to **Fr. Carlos** who has served as dean since prior to my arrival in the diocese. He's worked tirelessly to unite the deanery and foster our core values of Collegiality, Transparency and Accountability. **THANK YOU FOR YOUR FAITHFUL MINISTRY FR. CARLOS!**



Last month, I named **Fr. Townsend Waddill** as the new dean of the Central Denary. Fr. Townsend brings experience and energy to the table, and I am grateful that he has agreed to serve. I am so very indebted to the ministry of the Deans whose advice and counsel has been of the greatest importance to me.

A YEAR FOR THE HISTORY BOOKS

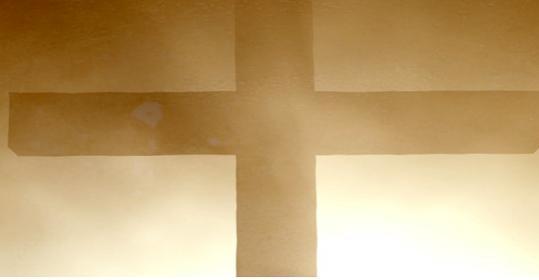
Friends, any way you cut it, 2020 has been an historic year. Beginning in late January or early February we heard of a new virus born in Wuhan China known as the Novell Corona Virus Disease 2019 or COVID 19 for short. Before long, it swept the country. While starting slowly in the Central Valley, the Bay Area was hit hard. Before long the Governor and local county authorities began to send out guidelines for Houses of Worship. This immediately raised the question for us as Christians, and me as your bishop, "Do we follow the guidelines that forbid in-person worship? Or do we defy the guidelines in order to uphold our desire as Christians to worship the Lord in community and perhaps assert our right for free assembly?"

Ultimately, as Bishop the decision came down to me. I sought direction from the Lord in His Word, I spoke and prayed with brother bishops and sought the counsel of the deans and senior clergy. A dear friend and senior clergyman said this which resonated in my soul, "Bishop, we have to remember that the Great Commandment trumps the First Amendment." Meaning that the desire to love our neighbor and keep them safe is a higher value than worshipping together or asserting our right to free speech and assembly. In addition, because of technology and our ability to have services on a virtual platform, and then distribute Holy Communion either in drive-through or home visitations, I made the decision for the diocese to follow the state and county guidelines. I recognize that this decision was popular with some and very unpopular with others, and I bare full responsibility for that decision, if you are upset with this decision - please don't take it out on your clergy – reach out to me.

Of course, COVID 19 has not been the only challenge that we've faced as individuals, diocese and nation. We've been in the midst of an extremely contentious election; in fact, I am recording this Convention Address on November 3rd, Election Day, and I'm praying that all who are able will, in fact, exercise their right to vote!

Chances are about half of you are very happy with the results of the election, if they are in yet, and half are unhappy. The fact is in my 58 years, I've never seen the nation so divided. This division isn't simply political. Far too many have adopted, either intentionally or by benign neglect, something that sociologists refer to as Cancel Culture. This is the attitude with which we will paint a wide swath of animosity across anyone or group with whom we disagree. Too many of us have lost the art of civility. In Cancel Culture rhetoric, we don't

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simply disagree with someone – we label them as a racist or socialist, alt-right or radical liberal. Friends, this phenomenon is a cancer in our culture and, if allowed within the Church will surely cripple our ability to share the gospel of Jesus Christ. We have only to look to the example of Jesus and the Apostles to know that rather than rejecting and dismissing people with whom we disagree, we engage them as Jesus did over and over again. Jesus ate with and spoke to tax collectors and sinners, Pharisees and Sadducees alike.



Jesus clearly preached in the Sermon on the Mount that we are to love our enemy and pray for those who persecute us. St. Paul, in his first epistle to the Church in Corinth, tells us that Love is the greatest gift of God. That love is patient and kind, it is not quick to take offense, it bears all things, hopes all things, and endures all things (1 Corinthians 13). This does not mean that we ignore our differences or simply hold our tongue – no, we are called to “speak the Truth in Love” – as St. Paul tells us in Ephesians chapter 5.

This means that sometimes we will have hard and uncomfortable conversations where we, as Christians, hold one another accountable. But that is what Jesus taught and demonstrated and exactly how we should live.

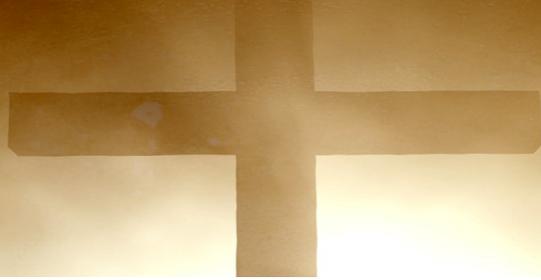
Of course, the contentious election and Cancel Culture were not alone or happening in a vacuum. Following the death of George Floyd from police officers kneeling on his neck, back and legs, the nation erupted in peaceful protesting, often morphing into riots, arson and looting. Hundreds, if not thousands of people, police officers and citizens alike, were injured in violent confrontations. As a diocese we responded by prayer. We spoke out in support of law enforcement and peaceful protests. We named the sin of racism calling one another to repentance and spoke out against the sin of violence against people and the destruction of property. While the diocese was for the most part spared from the protests and violence, our TV and computer screens have revealed the destruction and anxiety has been high and nerves on edge.

Then, of course, late summer lightning strikes started fires up and down the State that resulted in literal firestorms affecting the whole of the diocese. Many of our parishioners were evacuated and forced to live with family, fellow parishioners or shelters and hotels - if they were able to find them. The smoke from these fires created the worst air conditions possible, so that even as we were able to begin holding outdoor worship services, some had to be canceled because the air quality was just too harmful to be outside.

All of these events, most of which have been building for some time, came within the span of eight months, and presented the greatest challenge to us as individuals, congregations and a diocese. However, with these challenges also came opportunities for ministry as we’ve never had before. Early on in the crisis, Fr. Karl Dietze said that our challenge as congregations and a diocese isn’t simply responding to the crises as they arise – but leveraging the crises to the glory of God. While these things may have snuck up on us, they were not and are not a surprise to God! And they will not and cannot destroy God’s Church! Remember the words of Jesus – **“On this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it!”** (Mt. 16:18)

The leadership challenge for our lay leaders and clergy has been engaging people, especially those who are not in our congregations, and with whom we now have contact using Zoom, YouTube, Facebook Live and other

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internet streaming tools. This has meant that we could engage the people in our communities, who are asking tough questions about the meaning of life and the existence of God. As a result, several of our churches have actually grown over these past eight months. Zoom discussion groups and bible studies have popped up with people who have never darkened the door of our churches.

Many of our churches reported that members of the congregation are sharing their livestreamed or recorded services with people all across the country. I was thrilled to learn that, for the church I pastor, Our Lady of Guadalupe, that a Wednesday evening “watch party” in Mexicali, Mexico, has formed in order to watch our mid-week celebration of Holy Eucharist.

I rejoice in speaking with clergy who share their experiences of engaging people and groups – and I want to encourage even more engagement, not less. I love hearing of the work of God’s healing hand and God’s provision, especially when many worried that giving to support ministry would dry up most of the congregations. The good news is that many are on target to meet their budgets for the year and some have succeeded their budgets already.

Recently, when **St. Martin of Tours, Fresno** was destroyed in an arson fire the people of the diocese immediately stepped up to offer prayerful and material support. Of course, we should not be surprised by all of this –

- God’s will is perfect,
- God’s love is perfect, and
- God’s provision is perfect!

THINGS TO CELEBRATE OVER THIS PAST YEAR

Since our last convention we’ve seen God’s Will, Love and Provision in action.

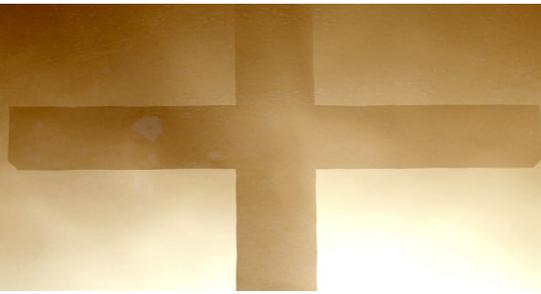
The Diocese of Kigezi

Friends, I am so proud of you and this diocese as I’ve seen you all become instruments of God’s Grace and provision for our Companion Diocese of Kigezi in Uganda.

In June I was supposed to lead a delegation to Kigezi and visit them, as **Bp. George Bagamuhunda** visited us last Fall. Unfortunately, the pandemic put an end to those plans. However, not long after the travel bans were enacted Bp. George reached out to us in prayer as a triple threat hit Uganda and his diocese. First, COVID 19 caused the same shut down there as it did here with similar health and economic impact. Second, shortly afterwards his diocese was hit with a literal plague of locusts which destroyed the crops which primarily grow along the hillsides that had been deforested in order to have arable land to plant crops on so that they could survive. Third, soon after the locusts left torrential rain storms arrived causing flooding and erosion, not only washing away land but washing away homes, stores and churches as well.



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Bp. George and the Diocese of Kigezi applied to Anglican Relief and Development (ARDF) for \$30,000 in assistance to help buy food and help members of the diocese to rebuild. However, because of the pandemic and the world-wide need all at the same time, ARDF decided that they would only award each applicant a maximum grant of \$5,000 and then, only as a challenge grant if they could raise a matching \$5,000.

Bp. George in one of our monthly phone calls asked for prayer and a letter of support to ARDF. However, when I put the callout for prayer the immediate response from our diocese was how can we help? The Standing Committee responded by offering up \$10,000 in aid so that Kigezi could receive the ARDF grant of \$5,000 making a total of \$15,000. We put out the call to the diocese - congregations and individuals immediately responded raising over \$21,000. That combined with the Standing Committee Grant and the ARDF grant gave them over \$36,000, which would not meet all of their need, but went a long way to rebuilding. If you are interested there are photos on our website that document the arrival of much needed supplies.

Again, God's provision is perfect and I am so grateful for your immediate response, even in the midst of economic uncertainty at home.

Anglican Catechist Training Schools (ACTS)

At the beginning of the year a team of ACTS graduates and I were preparing retreats to lead in congregations but COVID 19 put an end to that. However, while many were fearing that the church would close - our Anglican Catechists Training School continued to ramp up and offer classes.

Currently, there are eight students preparing to be licensed as Catechists all across the diocese, literally, from Petaluma to Bakersfield and Fresno to Henderson. In addition, there are two students in the ACTS-2 class preparing to be licensed as Lay Pastoral Leaders or Church Planters!

The ACTS curriculum is being shared widely, and last Summer I was thrilled to offer a lecture to students at Trinity School for Ministry in their Catechist class.

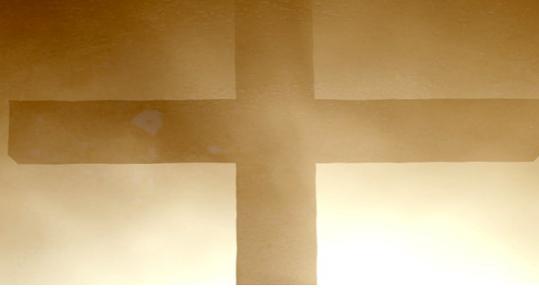
Recently, **Beth Conkle**, our director, was interviewed for an article in The Apostle which is the Provincial E-Newsletter.

Christ Church Anglican Mission – Reno

At last year's convention I announced that we'd be replanting in Reno. I'm very happy to say that Christ Church Anglican Mission – Reno is up and running. Thanks to the strong lay leadership of **Larry Morris** along with several others, they've been offering Sunday services for several months now. We are blessed to have **Fr. Timothy Laundrie** present every other Sunday when Holy Eucharist is provided and on the other Sunday's lay people offer the Office of Morning Prayer.



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We are actively looking for a priest/church planter to come to Reno to assist with this mission. I am thrilled that one of our catechists is moving to Reno along with his family, and they've already laid out a new website and are making plans for the future. Please pray for this ministry and God's blessing up it!



Church Planting in Southern Nevada

In addition to Christ Church in Reno, we have partnered with the Diocese of Western Anglicans in planting St. Martin of Tours, Las Vegas. This has been a wonderful collaboration spearheaded by **Fr. Howard** and **Deacon Erin Giles** along with the good people of Jesus the Good Shepherd, Henderson.

St. Martin's already has a location for worship and a planter in **Deacon Paul Nacin**, who was ordained to the Sacred Order of Deacons last December. I am looking forward to ordaining him to the priesthood on December 12th along with **Bp. Keith Andrews** of the Diocese of Western Anglicans.

This relationship between the Diocese of San Joaquin and the Diocese of Western Anglicans for church planting in Southern Nevada is a model for the rest of the province.

ACNA West

Along those same lines we continue to partner with the five dioceses: Cascadia, Western Anglicans, South West, C4SO and San Joaquin to form the ACNA West Ministry. The mission of ACNA West is to assist in the preparation and examination of candidates for Holy Orders between our dioceses. By God's Grace ACNA West is led by our own **Deacon Erin Giles** and is housed out of Jesus the Good Shepherd, Henderson.

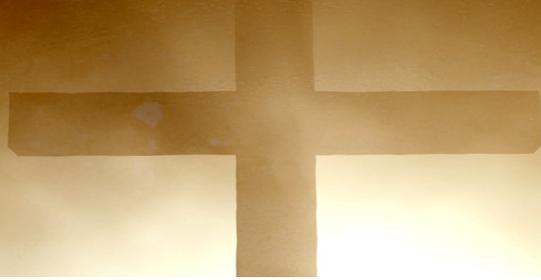
Again, this is a model for the whole province and I rejoice in the efficient and pastoral way that Deacon Erin runs this ministry, which cannot be easy having to herd five bishops, a dozen examining chaplains along with the candidates who are examined each year.

New Vocations

Speaking of candidates for Holy Orders, I rejoice that we currently have six people in the ordination process – two for the permanent diaconate and four for the priesthood. Four of the students are currently studying at Nashotah House in Wisconsin, with three in residence and one on-line. In the spring, two will finish their studies, one is slated for next spring, and the fourth the following spring. A fifth is studying on-line at Trinity School for Ministry, in Pennsylvania, and the sixth will begin studies next fall.

Please pray that God will raise up more vocations in the diocese, people who are well equipped and trained to carry on the mission and ministry of the diocese to the next generation.

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Exhortation

Of course, the need for new vocations and new lay and clergy leaders goes hand in hand with the need to engage people, near and far with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This need will not end with the election, pandemic, civil and economic unrest, or natural disasters. The very heart of our call as Christians is to reach out to a lost and broken world for Christ and to help those looking for meaning in life find the Savior.



Friends, the mission of the Diocese of San Joaquin is to:

Train, Equip, Support and Encourage clergy and lay leaders to bring people to, and disciple them in, a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

Won't you join me and your brothers and sisters in the diocese in rededicating yourself to this mission and ministry?

Please pray with me:

Eternal God and Heavenly Father, bless the Diocese of San Joaquin. Inspire us and strengthen our bonds to you and one another. Help us to witness to the saving power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, that with Godly love, patience, and zeal we may win many hearts to the Truth once delivered. We ask this through Jesus Christ, your son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. – Amen



Who is Saint Nicholas? The legend of jolly old Saint Nicholas evolved into Santa Claus in Christmas tradition, but *Who is Saint Nicholas?* Saint Mark's Anglican Church in Loomis, California has the story on their website: <https://www.stmarksloomis.org/>.



It's a long journey from Nicholas, the fourth century Bishop of Myra, whose caring for others models true giving and faithfulness, to America's jolly Santa Claus. Today in the United States there is growing interest in reclaiming the true story of Saint Nicholas as an example of how Christians are meant to live. **Saint Nicholas put Jesus Christ at the center of his life, ministry and his entire existence.** Such a focus helps restore balance to our increasingly materialistic and stress-filled Advent and Christmas seasons.

Celebrating the King of King's Birth

As the nights close in, and the days shorten, we long to see light. As the winter gets colder, we long for warmth. As nature around us seems strangled by death, we need signs of hope and life. And as the inconvenience of going out gets greater, and we are more isolated from friends and neighbors, we long for company....

Who can bring us light but the light of the world (John 8.12)?

“Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, ‘I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.’”

Who can bring us warmth but the One who has poured God's love into our hearts (Romans 5.5)?

“... and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.”

Who gives us hope beyond death, but the One who not only tasted death for us, but swallowed it up in victory (1 Cor. 15.54)?

“When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’”

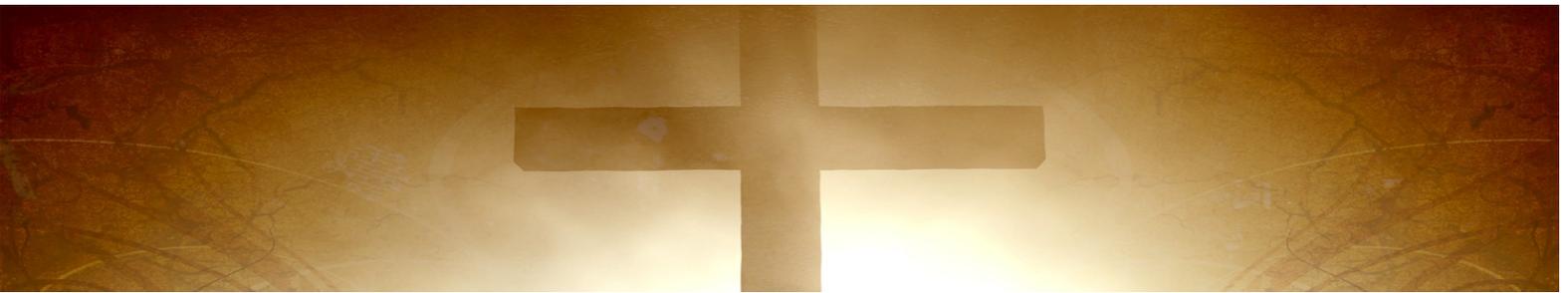
And who else can bring us into friendship with God (2 Cor. 5.18–19)?

“All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.”

** Ian Paul, Anglican theologian, St. Nic's Church, Nottingham, England.*



PEACE LOVE HOPE JESUS



The Song of the Angels

By Susan A. Schnetz

Saint Luke records in his Gospel that Caesar Augustus had ordered a census be conducted of the “...entire Roman World,” during (or possibly before) Quirinius’ governorship of Syria, and this is the reason that Joseph and Mary, who lived in Nazareth, were in Bethlehem, King David’s place of birth, when Jesus was born. According to the narrative in chapter 1, Mary had travelled from Nazareth to a city in the hill country of Judah to visit her cousin Elizabeth, and then returned to Nazareth, then travelled again with Joseph from Nazareth to Bethlehem.



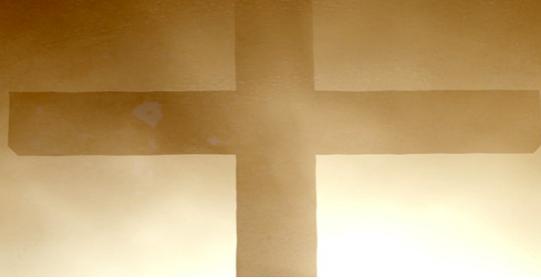
Many English translations suggest that the purpose of the census was for everyone to be registered, while the King James Version and others state that everyone was to be taxed. The Expanded Bible suggests that the register was compiled for taxation purposes.

The Angels Great Announcement

“Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. Then the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.’ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!’” (Luke 2:8-14 NKJV)

The angels told the shepherds that their message of good news “will be to all people” (Luke 2:10). God’s goodwill is for everyone, for “He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous” (Matthew 5:45). His merciful will reaches out to all mankind to bring peace, completeness, and wholeness. And in the birth of Jesus, God has drawn near to demonstrate within the bounds of history what His will is, to give voice to all, “Sweetly singing o’er the plains,” or “Angels we have heard on high” – examples of His will (Hebrews 1:1-2). God’s will is for all humankind in the birth of Jesus and the Advent season would not be complete without our singing “Gloria in excelsis Deo!” – Glory to God in the highest!

Jesus, His glory, peace, and favor have drawn near to us. And personally, let the song of the angels to the shepherds ring true in your heart and know that God is always near to you.



David Rudat's Musical Notes

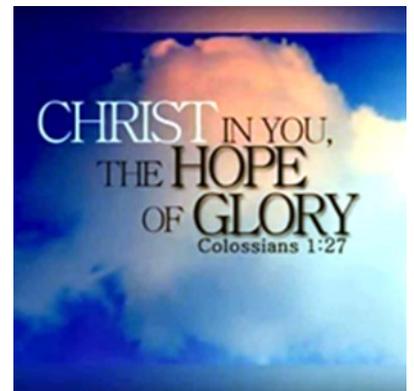


A Great Hymn of the 18th Century

A hymn often featured in Anglican church services in December is *Come Thou Long Expected Jesus*, written in 1744 by Charles Wesley (1707-1788).

Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus was the first of a number of Wesley's hymns that became known as the "Festival hymns." This hymn became popular across Christian denominations in England via popular Baptist preacher, Charles Spurgeon, and is considered an enduring classic in Christian hymnology. Spurgeon made a Christmas sermon in London in 1855 when he was 21 and included sections of *Come Thou Long Expected Jesus* in it to illustrate his point that very few are "born king," and that Jesus was the only One who had been born King without being a prince.

Wesley had in mind Haggai 2:7 when he wrote this hymn. Haggai speaks of the shaking of all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come. In the Old Testament language it was the hope of Messiah's coming which would fill the "house," the Temple, with the Glory of God. Saint Paul brought this theme into meaning: Christ (Messiah) in us, the hope and expectation of glory. Jesus in us fills us with the glory of God. A theme Saint Paul repeats throughout the New Testament (Colossians 1:27).



Wesley was an excellent wordsmith and possessed the ability to craft a phrase using words to emphasize a point, often which seemed hidden. For example, in his verses Wesley uses imperative verbs beseeching Christ to "come," "release," "find," "rest," "bring," "rule," and "raise" in addition to using the word "born," to remind us what Christ was born to do.

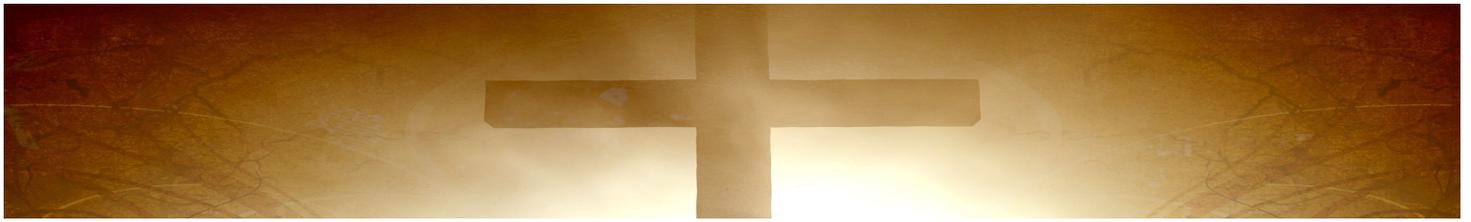
In my research of hymns I'm continually reminded of the depth of godliness hymn writers possessed and the wealth of scripture at their "fingertips." The Bible to them was their daily bread and butter. Indeed, Wesley took a somewhat unfamiliar Old Testament verse and built a beautiful rich Advent hymn from it that we enjoy today, some 276 years later.



The original text by Charles Wesley has two stanzas of eight lines each.

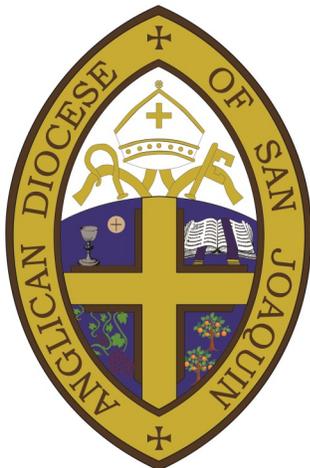
Come, thou long expected Jesus,
born to set thy people free;
from our fears and sins release us,
let us find our rest in thee.
Israel's strength and consolation,
hope of all the earth thou art;
dear desire of every nation,
joy of every longing heart.

Born thy people to deliver,
born a child and yet a King,
born to reign in us forever,
now thy gracious kingdom bring.
By thine own eternal spirit
rule in all our hearts alone;
by thine all sufficient merit,
raise us to thy glorious throne.



Bishop's Note series--

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Please send these to melody@ctkridgecrest.org

Thank you!