THE SAN JOAQUIN ANGLICAN



The Bishop's Corner -

Convention Address: Given at the 62nd Annual Convention on November 5, 2021 in Merced

The Right Reverend Eric Vawter Menees

"He said to them, 'Sanctify them in the Truth.

Your Word is Truth.'"

John 17:17

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

Welcome to the 62nd Annual Convention of the Diocese of San Joaquin. What a blessing it is to be with you all IN PERSON! I have missed you and I have missed being together. There is something that is so important when we meet to worship, fellowship, and do ministry together in person, where we can look each other in the eye, and not through a computer screen, feel one another's presence - even if we are keeping a safe distance.

There is no way around it and no rosy hues that can be painted. These past 19 months, since the beginning of the pandemic, have been hard. We have been stretched, bumped, and bruised like the rest of the country. We in the diocese of San Joaquin have not been immune to political divisions with roots that run very deep. These

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Bishop's Schedule And Diocesan Calendar

November 20 - 10:00 am - Standing Committee

November 24 - 5:00 pm - East-West Deanery Clericus on Zoom

November 24, 25, & 26 - Diocesan Office Closed

December 1 - 10:30 am—Diocesan Clergy Meeting on Zoom

December 5 - Bishop at Our Lady of Guadalupe, Fresno and St. Clement of Alexandria, Woodlake

December 6, 7, & 8 - Clergy Retreat, St. Anthony, Three Rivers

December 11 - 10:00 am - Commission on Ministry

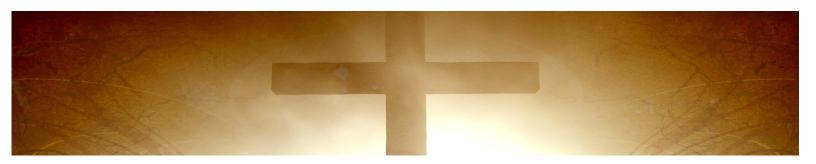
December 12 - Bishop at Our Lady of Guadalupe, Fresno

December 15 - 10:30 am— Diocesan Clergy Meeting on Zoom

December 15 - 1:30 pm - Southern Deanery Clericus

December 18 - 10:00 am - Standing Committee

December 19 - Bishop at Holy Cross, Sanger and Our Lady of Guadalupe, Fresno



divisions are not simply confined to differences over the role of government in our personal and collective lives but also to questions of race and ethnicity, sexual and gender identity, economic aid, health care and public health mandates, and my directives to the diocese in response to the pandemic. All of these are important issues; there is no doubt about it. However, all too often they are cast in light of division – them verses us – you either agree with me and are therefore correct or you disagree with me and are therefore incorrect. But sadly, it does not end there... the other person is not simply cast as incorrect but ignorant, a radical liberal or rabid conservative – you are either in or out – but beyond being out - you are erased – canceled – labeled and dehumanized.

These hard lines of division are destructive and harmful and have no place in the church. Our role is to represent Christ and His Kingdom. To preach truth and righteousness, to call people to holiness and hold one another accountable, to repent when we are in error and seek forgiveness and reconciliation wherever and whenever possible. I do not mean to overstate the divisions that have affected us, but I also do not want to sweep them under a rug or act as if we are unaffected.

Friends, in the face of these challenges our response must not be to fan the flames of division but to seek Christ and his Kingdom. Scripture is so clear about this... Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount says, "But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things will be added to you." (Mt. 6:33) While the world seeks to divide, Christ seeks to unite and reconcile, and we should seek the same things.

Now, all that being said I want to say how proud I am of all of you for seeking to live into that call of Christ and to fulfill the mission of the Diocese – "To train, equip, support and encourage clergy and lay leaders to bring people to and disciple them in a saving relationship with Jesus Christ." You all have demonstrated this with a surprising flexibility and resilience. Two years ago, if I told you that 95% of you would be holding services via live stream, doing discipleship via zoom, and conducting virtual coffee hours you would have thought I was crazy. However, within a few months of the pandemic that is exactly what was happening. Quickly we developed people in our communities who were experts, or at least proficient, at "Youtubing" which is apparently a thing. We soon discovered that our footprint went far beyond the boundaries of our cities. I was amazed and thrilled to discover that families were gathered in Mexicali, Mexico, to watch together the Facebook livestream of the services at Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe – even interacting with the service and sending in prayer requests in real time.

We also discovered that virtual worship and a virtual community while helpful to a point ultimately leaves us wanting. Thankfully, as we return to a more "normal" existence many of our virtual participants are visiting us in person and joining our real-life communities. Still, I believe that continuing to develop hybrid platforms will benefit our communities near and far and bring people to a saving relationship with Jesus.

Now with all that being said let me bring you up to date with several important items regarding the life and health of our diocese. Since we met last at the 61st Annual Convention much has occurred... Allow me to give a brief update regarding people, events, and ministries.

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CLERGY

Because of the Pandemic I was forced to delay several installation services, but I was finally able to install **Fr. Fabien Pering** as Rector at Christ the King, Ridgecrest; **Fr. Michael Bush** as Rector at Christ Church, Oakhurst; and **Fr. Townsend Waddill** as Rector at St. Columba Church, Fresno.

We have had three ordinations with **Fr. Michael Bush** to the priesthood and deacons **Jack Franicevich** and **Luke Childs** to the transitional diaconate.

We have had some clergy transitions this past year. **Fr. Philip Berghuis** has transitioned from the Bishop's Office to complete his training in Clinical Pastoral Education at Community Regional Medical Center, Fresno. **Fr. Dale Matson & Fr. Carl Johnson** have officially retired. **Fr. Chris Fanucchi** transitioned from St. Mark's, Loomis to full-time military chaplaincy and **Fr. Jim Sweeney** has taken a position in Georgia as a school administrator and assisting at Christ the King, Holly Springs. Though, I hasten to note that Fr. Sweeney remains one of our vital diocesan Chancellors and canonically resident in the diocese.

Fr. Noah Lawson has transitioned from St. Alban's & St. Augustin, Los Banos to be Rector Coadjutor of St. James. In January he will become the first Rector of **Emmanuel Anglican Church** which will be the combined congregations of Our Lady of Guadalupe and St. James as they grow into a new future as one congregation. Unfortunately, two of our clergy have transitioned out of the diocese and out of the priesthood in the Anglican Church in North America and they are **Steve Braun** and **Joshua Drake**.

Sadly, this year we laid to rest a beloved brother, **Fr. Roger Riggsby**. We continue to pray for his widow Joyce and all the clergy widows still with us.

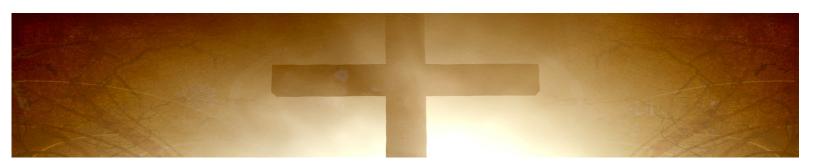
Lastly, and joyfully, **Dcn. Luke and Trista Childs** welcomed the birth of baby **Henry James Childs** on October 23rd. Mom, baby Henry and big sister Ada are all doing well.

PROPERTIES

This past year **St. Mary the Virgin, Manteca** and **Epiphany, Corcoran** had their Churches sold out from underneath them. Thankfully, Our Savior's, Modesto opened their hearts and doors to St. Mary's for continued worship. Epiphany is now being housed in a parishioner's barn, which, if you think about it, is an appropriate place for a church named Epiphany!

This year, after suffering deaths and people moving **St. Peter's, Kernville**, decided to reduce to a house church. They were so gracious in offering to support our Church plant, in Reno with several important items for worship as well as financial support. A special word of thanks to **Fr. Ron Ryan** and the people of St. Peter's for your generosity!

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VOCATIONS & OPEN POSITIONS

One of our greatest challenges in the diocese has been in raising up new vocations and calling clergy to serve in the diocese. I bid your prayers for those officially in the ordination process now: **Micah Hogan & David Peterson** who are pursuing the priesthood and **Dolores Vargas & Robert Bell** for the vocational diaconate.

We have several congregations looking for Rectors & Assistants including Trinity, Bakersfield who is looking for a full-time assistant. St. Clement, Woodlake; Holy Cross, Sanger; St. Alban & St. Augustin, Los Banos; St. Francis, Stockton; and St. Mark's, Loomis are all looking for full-time Rectors.

I am pleased to announce that recently **Christ Church, Lemoore** has called **Fr. Andy Ainley** as their new Rector. Fr. Ainley will be starting the first week of Advent. **Christ Church, Reno** has called their first rector, **Fr. Juan Marentes** who will be coming on board around the beginning of the year.

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

Last Spring, **Fr. Phil Berghuis**, began to sense a stirring to return to pastoral ministry. We prayed and he decided to apply for a position in clinical pastoral education. That meant we began the search for a new Diocesan Administrator and by God's Grace **Christina Pestana** came on staff and what a blessing she has been in just a few short months. Christina's gifting is in organization, and I am sure we will be seeing changes in my office in the following months. Please do all that you can to be patient with us as we implement those changes.

Raul Villa and **Virginia Gottlieb** continue to provide much needed and important ministry in the diocesan office. 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 before. On each and every occasion he has stepped up to the plate and hit a home run.

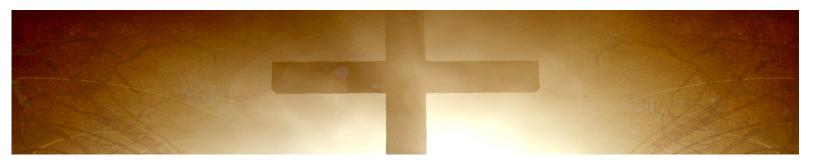
In addition to our paid staff **Fr. Richard James**, continues to assist congregations in the search process and will soon be mentoring clergy as well. **Ms. Beth Conkle** our Director of the Anglican Catechists Training School has brought national attention to our diocese and the ACTS training program. This year's class even has students participating remotely from across the country in hopes that other dioceses can form an ACTS program for themselves.

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.

I continue to be profoundly grateful for the ministry of our Rural Deans. Fr. John Roberts, Fr. Gordon Kamai, Fr. Townsend Waddill and Fr. Karl Dietze offer terrific leadership at the deanery level and valuable counsel to me. I try not to make any major decisions without first consulting with them.

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.

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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. Can we demonstrate that gratitude right now with a round of applause?

LEGAL UPDATES

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

I mentioned last year that the wheels of justice move slowly. Antonio Castañeda still has not yet been tried. While I reported his abuse to the police in the fall of 2017, he was arrested nearly a year later, was able to get out on bond and is currently required to wear an ankle monitor. At present he is set to go to trial on February 22, 2022. Please continue to pray for the victims of his abuse.

As a result of this case, we have had to examine and improve our own ecclesiastical trial procedures. To that end I have appointed **Fr. Jim Snell** as our diocesan canonical investigator. That means when a complaint comes in about a deacon or priest, I will pass the investigation along to Fr. Snell rather than investigating it myself.

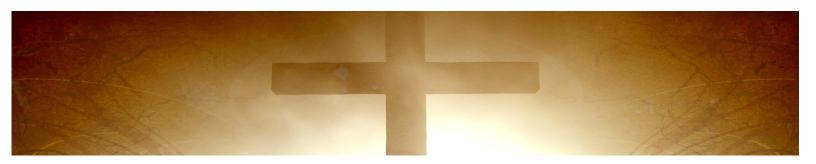
A YEAR FOR THE HISTORY BOOKS

Friends, last year I stated in my virtual address to convention, that 2020 was a year for the History books, and indeed it was. 2021 has continued in the same vein. It seems that just as the Corona Virus ebbs, a new variant comes on the scene, and it flows again. Thankfully, with the rollout of the vaccine, we are seeing it ebb again. I have encouraged the clergy in every way I can to prepare for visitors to come into our churches.

With the pandemic people are experiencing an existential crisis. Each one of us, in one way or another, has had to deal with our own mortality. For many of us, this is a first-time event, and that angst draws us to ask the ultimate questions of the meaning of life - on this earth and what happens after death. The church is the obvious place to go and, indeed, we are receiving visitors. The question is not whether or not visitors will come but are we prepared to receive them in such a way that we can present the Good News of Jesus Christ as expressed within Anglicanism in a winsome and intelligible way?

To assist us in this quest I reached out to Thrive Ministries and participated in their Church Goals program. What they had to say resonated with me and the clergy who joined me in that course. We then connected with Jud Boies, our keynote speaker, to see if we could adapt the course to an Anglican culture. Jud read every book I gave him, visited our churches, physically and virtually and, indeed has adapted his training. Currently a dozen of our clergy and congregations are involved at one level or another with training and mentoring. One of the things I find especially helpful is the fact that Thrive come to us with a fresh lens, they ask the same questions that people new to Christianity will ask and especially new to the Anglican Church.

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Along with the classes and mentoring Jud and his team have assisted us in applying for and receiving a Google Grant for the Diocese. This grant is open to all the congregations that fall under our 501(c)3 designation. What will this grant provide? \$10,000 in free google advertising per-congregation, per-month, per-year. With this grant we are partnering with Missional Marketing which helps to administer the grant and, most importantly, optimize our websites so that we get greater hits when people search the web regarding churches or identified needs that the church, through Christ, can meet. Pastor Jud will talk more about that later.

Now, I want to be clear that these grants are not only open to those congregations under our 501(c)3 but all congregations. Those that are independently incorporated need to apply separately but they are receiving positive responses to their applications as well, with Jud's help. Through this process we are learning how to not only to optimize our websites but our ministries; from how to introduce people to liturgy, to being better communicators, to reaching our communities with more effective evangelism and mercy ministries.

A FEW MINISTIES TO HIGHLIGHT

In addition to partnering with Thrive ministries we have maintained many of our key ministries.

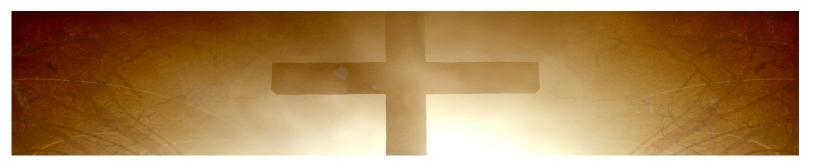
THE DIOCESE OF KIGEZI

Our partnership with the Diocese of Kigezi has continued, though due to the pandemic at a slower pace than I would have liked. Twice now I have been scheduled to go to Uganda and tour the diocese in the same manner that Bishop Bagamuhunda did with us. Twice that trip has been canceled due to COVID. I bid your prayer for Bishop George who has been ill as of late – much the result of long COVID. As a result of his illness Bishop George has announced an early retirement effective December 31st of this year. I am currently planning to go to Uganda in the late Spring / Early Summer to meet with Bishop George's successor, who is yet to be named, and hopefully to be present for his consecration.

In addition to my going to visit, we continue to support **Shepherd's Love Orphanage & School** in the diocese of Kigezi and I am incredibly grateful to **April Dobbs** and her ministry with Shepherd's Love. April and her husband have just visited Uganda and the orphanage, and I am looking forward to receiving her report and learning how the orphanage & school have survived COVID.

I also pray that you are aware that our diocese is supporting two missionaries who will be moving to Uganda just as soon as logistics permit. **Fr. Richard and Martha Menees** will be serving as long term missionaries, making a commitment for three years. The current plan is for Fr. Richard to teach at the diocesan and provincial level and for Martha to serve in healthcare in the diocese. Please, please support them in this ministry. They desperately need your prayerful support, your logistical support, and your financial support. As Fr. Richard and Martha get on the ground in Uganda, my prayer is that they will be able to assist us in setting up companion parish relationships. I know that these relationships will be a blessing for us in San Joaquin and for them in Kigezi.

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Friends, I am so proud of you and this diocese as I have seen you all become instruments of God's Grace and provision for our Companion Diocese of Kigezi in Uganda. Last year, in response to the dual disasters of COVID and torrential rains and the accompanying mudslides, we were able to raise and send \$36,000 to the Diocese of Kigezi which was literally a life saver for the diocese. If you go to our website, you can see photos that demonstrate how your gifts were put to use.

ANGLICAN CATECHIST TRAINING SCHOOL.

COVID did not mean an end to our raising up and training Lay Catechists. Indeed, our Anglican Catechist Training School is stronger than ever. The ACTS curriculum is being shared widely, and as I mentioned earlier other dioceses have enrolled leaders in our program to help them put together their own program. My only concern with regards to ACTS is that we are not getting enough of our congregations to participate. Those congregations that have participated have received such blessings in lay leadership. I encourage you to speak with Christ Church, Reno; St. John's, Petaluma; St. Matthias, Oakdale; St. James, Fresno; or Good Shepherd, Henderson and you will see the fruit of their ministries, numerically and spiritually. In fact, lay catechists at Good Shepherd, Henderson have launched Good Shepherd Classical Anglican School. Good Shepherd is currently a parochial grammar school, but their plan is to go K-12 over the next ten years, and I see no reason they will not succeed. Please pray about how you can participate in or support our Anglican Catechist Training School.

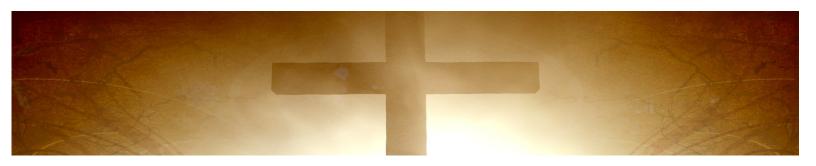
CHRIST CHURCH ANGLICAN MISSION - RENO

In March of 2020 we planted Christ Church, Reno. Of course, in hindsight the timing was awful. However, God has blessed our lay leaders and lay catechist who are heading up this ministry. They continue to average twenty plus people on a Sunday and have issued a call to their first full-time priest, Fr. Juan Marentes, who is a gifted leader and strategic thinker. Christ Church is currently worshiping in a community center but is exploring the possibility of establishing a second plant south in Carson City with dreams of eventually having two Anglican Churches in Northern Nevada.

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 Dcn.**Erin Giles along with the people of Good Shepherd, Henderson. St. Martin's has already purchased a building and rectory and fixed them up. I was honored to ordain **Fr. Paul Nacin** to the priesthood for Bishop Andrews last winter and St. Martins recently baptized six young teenagers, welcoming them and their families into the congregation.

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EXHORTATION

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?

Let us redouble our efforts to become welcoming and dynamic communities of faith.

Let us redouble our efforts to treat one another with the kindness and respect due to every person but especially to fellow Christians.

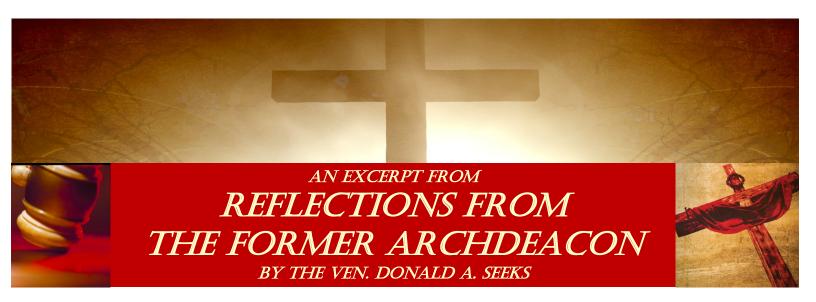
Let us redouble our efforts to be the ambassadors of Christ that Jesus has called us to be.

And let us redouble our efforts to equip each member of our congregations to be ambassadors for Christ and heralds of the Kingdom of God.

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.





Prayer Partners

Ascribe unto the Lord glory and strength... The Lord shall give strength to His people; The Lord shall give to His people the blessing of peace.

Psalm 29

As (some) of you know, it was determined late last December that I would have to undergo abdominal surgery. The date was set for April 23rd. During that waiting period I tried to inform as many Christians as possible of the impending "grand opening" because I did not want to have to experience this major event alone.

When I was an active parish priest, it always disappointed me whenever a member of the congregation said something like, "I'm going to have to go to the hospital, but I don't want anyone to know." That kind of suggestion said two things to me: (1) that the member did not realize he or she was a vital part of the body, the Body of Christ. St. Paul reminded the Corinthians that though there were many members, there was only one body in Christ. Paraphrased: "The foot cannot say to the hand or the ear or the ear to the eye, 'I don't belong,' because otherwise there will be great discord in the body." Paul declares that we need to have great care for one another because if one suffers, then in a real sense, all suffer together. Now the physical pain will be mine, but if the other members love me like they should, then they will participate to a degree in my suffering. (2) Withholding information about what is going to happen to us cheats our fellow members of the Body to further their opportunity to deepen their experience of intercessory prayer. Prayers of petition come so easily because it is very human to be self-concerned, but remembering others in our prayers, especially for healing, leads us in the direction of becoming more Christ-like. We recall our Lord's great high priestly prayer as recorded by St. John was intercessory to a high degree: "Father, I do not pray for these (disciples) only but also for those who believe in me through their word," He said. Prayers of intercession seek the highest and greatest good for the object of our prayers, so they are the essence of Christian love.

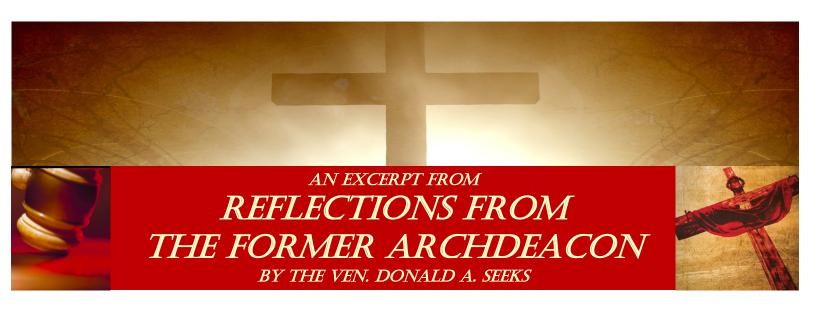
Please believe me when I say I felt the effect of all those prayers. As the Psalmist says, through all those dear people the Lord not only provided me with strength, but with the blessing of peace, the peace which surpasses all

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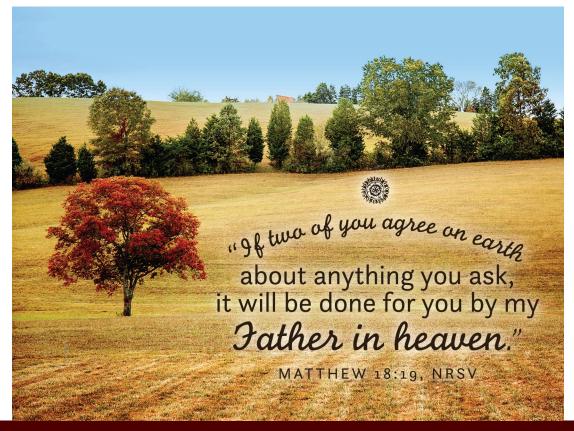
"If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it."

John 14:14, NRSV



human understanding, a peace which unbelievers never can know. When the time for surgery was at hand, all my feelings of apprehension and anxiety were completely erased, even to the point of joking with the operating room personnel and causing them to laugh before the surgery began.

Further, many of the people who had been so diligent in prayer for me also lifted up my family. The family experienced the same delightful sense of peace to the point that some others in the surgical waiting room wondered if they had retained all their faculties. My late mother, who recently had suffered two severe strokes, reported that she was at peace as well. The writer of Hebrews reminds us that as Christians we are continually surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses which allows us to lay aside every weight which is caused by sin. Certainly, attitudes of fear and anxiety have a sinful element and what a relief it is to avoid that kind of struggle before, during, and after a procedure that will be with me for the rest of my life. My deepest thanks and love to all my prayer partners, to those who wrote and called, and continued to pray for my rapid healing. What a joy and privilege it is to share these thoughts with you!



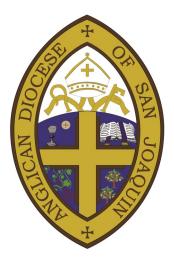




Bishop's Note series--

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Submissions will be accepted for consideration anytime. Contributions must be received by the **20th** of the month for possible inclusion in the newsletter in the following month.

Please send these to **melody@ctkridgecrest.org**.

Thank you!