



The Diocese of the Central States 2020 Synod Canon Missioner's Report

Background

This being my first report, I am taking the chronological liberty of reaching a bit further back in time than just the last year, with the intent of bringing us up to date and establishing the baseline for going forward.

New Churches & Plants

For some time now I have been in dialog with several members of the faculty at Patrick Henry College in Purcellville, VA, who are interested in starting a new church within the REC. I authorized them to begin MP and EP services under the auspices of the REC and DCS over a year ago, and they have done so.

Now, with the arrival of Fr. Jonathan Kell at Church of Our Saviour, Oatlands in Leesburg, VA, which is close to Patrick Henry, the dialog has advanced to include a possibility for the Purcellville folks to attend and help build Church of Our Saviour, with the potential to be a subsequent new plant by Church of Our Savior as the mother church.

St. Paul's Anglican Church in Lexington was received into the REC and the DCS in 2018. By 2019, we had installed a new Rector, The Rev. Dr. Eric Parker. Fr. Parker's work in building the church there has been complicated by the COVID situation. Nevertheless, there are new members, and visitors are slowly increasing.

Holy Cross Mission in Richmond, started by Fr. Mills several years ago as a new work from St. Jude's, is now investigating the purchase of a building. They are in the investigation stage, but hope to be able to purchase the property, add necessary functionality to the existing building, and leverage that presence in growing the church.

Though certainly not a new plant, Holy Trinity Church in Fairfax is, as of this writing, on the path to closing on a facility that will give them a footprint in the community. For the first time since their founding in the early 2000's, they are close to a building of their own.

Clergy Incubator

To plant churches and grow the Diocese, we need boots on the ground. We struggle to replace retiring or departing clergy within the Diocese, much less spin off new plants. I am working with St. Jude's in Richmond to bring in a new Deacon or Priest to be trained up under Fr. Bart+ and others, and prepared to be eventually sent out to plant or revitalize churches in the Diocese. We hope to create a pipeline of clergy training and preparation that helps supply the needs of a growing Diocese. We also have two new postulants in the Diocese, Mr. Tim Kline and Mr. Aaron Pelot.

Church Revitalization

Some of our churches are static or shrinking in membership, and some have aging congregations that are not being replenished with new young families. With church revitalization as the theme for our Synod, I have engaged The Rev. Canon Mark Eldredge as our speaker. Canon Eldredge is Director of Church Revitalization and Coaching for the American Anglican Council (AAC), and serves the ACNA in church revitalization. Canon Eldredge will be giving us a high-level overview of church revitalization due to having only a couple of hours on our busy agenda. That, though, should whet our appetites and draw us to the REC General Council in Dallas in June of next year, where Canon Eldredge will be teaching in much more detail.

Further, I have committed to engaging Canon Eldredge in a pilot program for church revitalization in our Diocese. The plan is to have him conduct one of his revitalization weekend seminars in one of our churches and evaluate the results. If it is as successful as I think it will be, we can replicate that by having him work with other churches in the Diocese.

Our "test" church is St. Paul's in Lexington, VA. Unfortunately, we have had to cancel three times due to COVID, and we still can't get a majority of the St. Paul's people out of COVID seclusion to attend the seminar. So, if your church is interested and able to convene the membership for this event, let's talk. We will still do St. Paul's, but I am looking for a more immediate venue to launch the pilot event.

REC 100 (Front Porch Ministries, Missional Churches, & Veritas)

Bishop Peter and I recently visited a church where he was asked about the use of Alpha in our Diocese. The answer is, we have Veritas. Veritas is the program that ++Bp. Sutton introduced at General Council over three years ago, and which keys on the words of Pilate in response to Jesus in John 18:37-38:

³⁷ ... for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice."

³⁸ Pilate said to Him, "What is truth?" ...

This is a great program for a number of reasons, but two main ones come to mind. For one thing, it works through our Anglican liturgy and heritage, sticking to the Scripture and presenting the gospel without camouflaging our Anglicanism. The sacraments are part and parcel to Veritas, so word and sacrament stay conjoined in the Anglican way. For another thing, Pilate's question in

John 18:38 is the very question people of all ages are asking earnestly today—and answering for themselves with denial and relativity. It is a program for Anglicans geared to our times. Along with Veritas come the ideas of *fishing with a net*, *front-porch* ministries, and *missional* churches.

Between now and next Synod, I plan to contact each church, and visit some, regarding REC 100. My intent is not to be the Veritas cop, but to open dialog with Rectors and see how the Diocese can be of help in making us a *missional* Diocese made up of *missional* churches. I know: “I’m from the Diocese and I’m here to help” doesn’t sound too appealing. But I think you will find that I really do want to help. I don’t have any magic dust, but I can open dialog and try to see what I can do.

I look forward to working with you in the coming year.

The Ven. W. Scott Thompson

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "W. Scott Thompson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Archdeacon
Diocese of the Central States