



The Diocese of the Central States

2021 Synod - Canon Missioner's Report

Background

Regarding just about everything related to church growth, the elephant in the room last year was COVID. For example, I committed to calling each of you to discuss the use of Veritas in your parishes, but such a call seemed silly when no one could have meetings and dinners. Likewise, our pilot program for "Revive" church growth seminars had to be cancelled three times due to COVID. Nevertheless, we have made some progress.

New Churches & Plants

Fr. Jonathan Kell, Rector of Church of Our Saviour, Oatlands in Leesburg, VA, continues to work with nearby Patrick Henry College in Purcellville, VA, regarding a future plant there. The interested principals at Patrick Henry are now attending Church of Our Saviour with the intent of helping to build that church to a point that a plant in Purcellville is more feasible.

Holy Cross Mission in Richmond, started by Fr. Mills several years ago, has now purchased a building in Amelia, VA. Fr. Mills holds Sunday morning services there, and continues to hold services on Sunday evening at Chesterfield Heights Retirement Living in Midlothian.

Holy Trinity Church in Fairfax completed the purchase of a building last year and after a long struggle with county building officials, has a permit for remodeling the interior and has started construction. They will soon be able to occupy the building and worship there, giving them a permanent and visible footprint in the community that will facilitate more growth.

With the reception of the Rev. Richard Tarsitano into the REC and DCS, we now have a mission work in Connersville, IN, including a building there.

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. We now have five postulants in the pipeline, one of whom was examined for the Diaconate yesterday. Two new clergy have been received into the REC and the DCS this year.

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. Last year, we had engaged The Rev. Canon Mark Eldredge, Director of Church Revitalization and Coaching for the American Anglican Council (AAC), as our speaker. Unfortunately, that had to be cancelled due again to COVID. However, Canon Eldredge adapted his presentation to Zoom and we all heard him at the REC General Council in June. We held our first “Cohort” follow-up Zoom meeting on 10/07.

Further, we finally got the pilot program done with Canon Eldredge visiting St. Paul’s in Lexington, VA September 8-10. Fr. Eric Parker reports that the weekend was well attended and a rousing success. He is now in the follow-up coaching phase with Canon Eldredge. The Diocese can arrange for funding this program, and I am ready to speak with you individually about arranging a Revive seminar.

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

With the emphasis on Canon Eldredge’s Revive program, a good question is how Veritas and Revive work together. Veritas is the program that ++Bp. Sutton introduced at General Council over four 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?" ...

Veritas has many advantages, 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.

I believe Veritas can be an important tool in executing REC 100 strategies, with or without a Revive seminar. I will recommit again this year to reach out to each Rector to discuss how Veritas and Revive might be more widely utilized in the DCS.

The Ven. W. Scott Thompson

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "William Brown", written on a light-colored background.

Archdeacon
Diocese of the Central States