

Diocese of the Central States
16th Synod, October 19, 2023
Bishop Ordinary Report

- I. Presiding Bishop Sutton, Diocesan Emeritus Morse, Archdeacon Thompson, Diocesan clergy and wives, lay delegates and invited guests, I am grateful to be together with you as we conduct the 16th synod of the Diocese of the Central States...the second DCS synod to be conducted via Zoom. The decision was made to conduct this year's synod electronically primarily for financial reasons. As you know, our REC General Council was held in June, and due to the costs incurred, I recommended we avoid the additional costs associated with attending our synod just 4 months later. The recommendation was readily received. It is certainly not ideal...I miss seeing everyone in person, and Lord willing we will be back together next year.
- II. Fr. Andrew Costa is serving as our meeting technician/host today, assisted by Dss. Michelle Caldwell. They are both with me here at Trinity Mason. Special thanks to them and to the Trinity parish for opening their church building for our use.
- III. It is an honor and blessing for me to have served another year as Bishop Ordinary of our Diocese. My fourth year is winding down; I will begin my fifth year as Ordinary in January. Thank you for this sacred trust! I am especially grateful to my fellow clergy and their wives. Your friendship, prayers, and partnership in this blessed Gospel ministry are among the priceless perks of serving as bishop. Please continue to pray for our diocese and for Janice

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and me as we move forward in ministering to our Central States region.

- IV. Welcome lay delegates! On behalf of all diocesan clergy, thank-you for supporting our work and for the gifts you bring to our parishes and ministry, and a personal thank-you from me for taking care of our clergy families and for your concern for their well-being and needs as they labor in God's harvest.
- V. And welcome guests, we are glad to have you with us...if you have questions, I hope we can answer them. Please know of our appreciation for you and of our desire to join hands with you in serving our Lord however we can.
- VI. I have again divided my activities report for the past 12 months into three sections: DCS, REC, ACNA.
- VII. First and longest the Diocese of the Central States. Again, this is our 16th synod, and there are currently 20 parishes and 2 missions in our diocese covering eight states with at least one parish in seven of the eight...West Virginia where are you!
 - A. In May, I met with the vestry of St. Luke's Anglican Church located in Maysville, KY (International Diocese ACNA), and in June they voted to begin the affiliation process with our diocese. They will remain in the International Diocese until June 2024. Our own Fr. Chris Beckham served as supply priest

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there for many years and as priest-in-charge since February 2022. We are delighted to receive our second Kentucky parish. Christ Redeemer, Owensboro is the other. It's REC's 150th anniversary, so another Kentucky parish in the fold reminds us that our founder, Bishop George David Cummins, was Assistant Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Kentucky right before *he "shocked the complacency of the Protestant Episcopal Church by resigning his Kentucky episcopate and founding an entirely new Episcopal denomination, the Reformed Episcopal Church.* Allen Guelzo, The Cupola Journal, "A Sufficiently Republican Church: George David Cummins and the REC". So we look forward to joyfully receiving St. Luke's, Maysville, KY next June!

B. On the flip side, I withdrew our diocesan affiliation with St Andrew's Appomattox, VA. Longstanding problems, financial and otherwise, remained unresolved despite our earnest and sincere efforts to unravel them.

VIII. In my role as Ordinary, I made a total of 24 diocesan parish and Episcopal visits over the past twelve months, and have appreciated the warm and gracious welcome I have received each time. I conducted 59 confirmations and welcomed 34 receptions during those visits. 13 of our 20 parishes held confirmations and/or receptions during my visits.

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- A. Overall our parishes continue to grow. Our average Sunday attendance (ASA) as a diocese has grown from 575 during the COVID decline in 2020 when I became Ordinary, to 682 in 2021, to 753 in 2022. That's a 40% increase since the Covid decline 3 years ago. I'm confident, based upon my interactions with rectors and parishes, that 2023 will likewise reflect an increase. For example, this synod is sandwiched between my most recent episcopal visits: All Saints, Lynchburg next week...where I'll be confirming 15 and receiving 5 receptions...and Christ the King, Dayton last weekend where there are 60 children age 14 and under in the congregation. I would love to see the ASA for our diocese cross and stay well over 1,000 before I retire, so keep up the good work...baptizing and making disciples!
- B. By the way, those ASA statistics are based upon our annual parish reports to ACNA. Our diocesan reporting record is good but not 100%. Rectors please keep good records and complete the annual reports. They do provide valuable information for use in evaluating the condition of our diocese. Our church is growing...our network of influence is increasing... people are being added to our fellowship day by day!
1. Regarding evaluating the condition of the diocese, I am also asking parishes to comply more closely with the directives pertaining to Episcopal visits as outlined in our Diocesan Customary. The reports are important in maintaining order,

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gauging parish health, assessing strengths and weaknesses,
and considering ways to help.

- C. We have two Convocations in our diocese, Ohio Valley includes parishes in Ohio, Indiana, Kentucky, and Tennessee ... Piedmont include parishes in Virginia, North Carolina, and Alabama. Once again: we'll decide where to put West Virginia when we have a parish there!
1. The Convocation structure provides another avenue for clergy to interact and strategize concerning their shared ministry region and to encourage one another. Clergy, plan to attend your convocation clericus. Delegates/vestries/treasurers set aside some funds for your clergy to attend these gatherings. I participated in the 2 Ohio Valley Clericus, one in April the other in October, and in the Quarterly Piedmont Clericus in March.
- D. Regarding diocesan clergy, I ordained Rev. Dcn. Jameson Overton, from Christ Our Hope, Westpoint, TN, to the diaconate and Rev. Andrew Costa, currently vicar for Trinity Mason, to the presbyterate during the last term. I will ordain David Heng from Trinity Evansville, IN to the diaconate in December. I instituted Rev. Michael Lewis as rector of Christ Our Hope in Fairborn, Ohio. Fr. Lewis comes to us having served as an Army Reserve Chaplain as well as rector and assisting priest in several

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parishes within the ACNA. A special thank-you to Fr. Michael Fitzpatrick who served as vicar at Christ Our Hope for three years. He guided the parish through a difficult season, clearing the way and laying a path for his successor, Fr. Lewis, to come and continue the work. Fr. Fitzpatrick recently accepted the post of Vicar of St. Albans, in NYC.

- E. I also received 2 new postulants, Jonathan McGill from Christ the King, Dayton, OH and Kevin Gottlieb from Holy Trinity, Chantilly, VA.
- F. So, there are currently 27 presbyters and 8 deacons, for a total of 35 active clergy resident within our diocese as well as 2 deaconesses, one deaconess candidate and 3 postulants . By my calculations, 40% of our active clergy fall in the 25-50 age range. Remember to pray: for the “Increase of Ministry”: p. 60.
- G. There is one open pulpit, Trinity, Mason which is close to being filled. Also Fr. Ian MacGregor recently announced his plans to retire in June 2024. Fr. Ian has faithfully led All Saints, Raleigh, NC for 22 years. It is a healthy, growing parish and is located in one of the most vibrant regions in the South known as the Research Triangle (Raleigh, Durham, Chapel Hill). The parish is well suited spiritually and geographically to build upon the Gospel ministry foundation solidly in place. I confirmed 8 adults during my last visit there.

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- H. It is also important to note that there are 8 retired clergy resident within our diocese. Some were able to assist with ministry activities in various ways, some regularly, others as needs have arisen, over the past year.
- I. Finally regarding clergy, I issued a letter dimissory for Rev. Matthew Joyner per his request for transfer to the United Episcopal Church of North America in February.
1. I assumed the role of interim for Trinity Mason in February after Fr. Joyner's departure. Then Deacon Andrew Costa and Fr. David Truax began assisting in March. Since his ordination as presbyter in August, Fr. Andrew has functioned as Interim and will do so until the end of the year.
- IX. Regarding Church Planting, we currently have two active REC 100 church plants, one in Connersville, IN and one in Ansonia, Ohio as well as one revitalization/plant, Christ the Redeemer, Owensboro, KY. All three are receiving REC 100 grants, and good progress is being made. We are also working with a prospective plant in Johnson City, TN. Rectors, please encourage each parishioner to participate in the REC 100 Lenten Offering. The goal is \$100 from every adult member. Each diocese has their own account, and all funds collected **by** the diocese are directed to church planting and revitalization **within** the diocese. Adn. Thompson, who serves as our Canon Missioner and coordinates

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our REC 100 projects, has some additional information in his report.

- A. I did want to highlight the Connersville plant. I visited them several times over the past year. Fr. Tarsitano is currently preparing a class of 10 for confirmation next year...so the plant is growing! I recently met with Adn. Thompson and Cn. Jason Grote and we agreed to extend the REC 100 grant for the work in Connersville for another year to December 2024. As you know Fr. Richard and his wife Megan have endured some difficult days lately. Fr. Richard's Mom, Sally passed away in September. Sally was an active and important member of the church plant and of course the beloved mother of the Tarsitano family and will be greatly missed. Her funeral is in two weeks in Connersville. Also and concurrently with Sally's passing, Megan gave birth to their new baby, Elsie, in September. The child was born with hydrocephalus (accumulation of spinal fluid within the brain) and is scheduled for brain surgery within the next month. The family is persevering and moving forward during these trying days. I know many have been praying, and Fr. Richard has asked for our ongoing prayers (BCP p. 67).
- X. I presided at one building consecration service during the past term. Holy Cross parish in Amelia, VA, Fr. Ken Mills, rector, purchased their church building debt free and quickly constructed

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an addition with a parish hall, classrooms and bathrooms. The chapel was filled for the consecration service in February.

XI. Regarding Church and Parish Schools: There are four schools functioning within our diocese: Dominion Academy, a ministry of Christ the King, Dayton; New Covenant Schools, Lynchburg, VA governed by an independent board while maintaining an affiliation with the REC through our DCS, and Hunter Classical School, Richmond, VA and the newest, St. George's Classical School, Lexington, VA; both diocesan schools. Another school year is underway...a Prayer for Christian Education is found on p. 65.

XII. Regarding other diocesan activities:

- A. Our diocesan Child Protection Policy for our parishes is in place. If a parish does not have its own policy, the parish falls under the Diocesan policy, so be sure to have a copy and abide by the requirements outlined.
- B. This year, at the recommendation by several, I formed a Committee to create model parish bylaws. Fr. Jonathan Kell chaired the committee, and they have done an excellent job fashioning a set of model parish bylaws. Difficult situations encountered by parishes within our diocese over the past year have exposed the inadequacy of certain parish by-laws. I ask everyone to review the model bylaws, currently posted on our website, and update your local parish policies as needed.

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C. I also took part in various diocesan committee meetings via zoom throughout the year

1. Standing Committee meetings: Fr. Josiah Jones has ably overseen the responsibilities of this group. We faced some particularly difficult issues this year, and I am grateful for their council and assistance in overseeing the diocese.
2. Board of Trustees: Tyler Crocker current chair, Ken Mills treasurer. They perform the all-important task of managing and stewarding our diocesan finances to the glory of God.
 - a) I value the camaraderie and working relationship I have with both groups...Standing Committee and Trustees. Each will present their reports today.

D. Other activities: I am also in regular communication with Archdeacon Scot Thompson and was able to visit with him in-person as well as have many phone conversations with him over the past year to discuss diocesan matters. I'm glad Adn. Scott is on our side! His counsel and friendship are invaluable to me. Thank you for willingly and sacrificially serving our diocese, Fr. Scott and MaryJane!

XIII. Thank you, also to our deaconesses Michelle Caldwell and Teresa Johnson. They serve faithfully, quietly and generously. I am so appreciative of their ministry to our diocese. Likewise, our

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administrative secretary, Mary Bailey, ably keeps our records and diocesan office in order. She has produced a diocesan Baptismal certificate which will be available for distribution by January 1, 2024. Thank you dearest Mary!

XIV. REC relations...

- A. Council of Bishops: I participated in 6 REC Bishop's meetings via zoom, and I am in regular communication with Bp. Sutton and the other REC Bishops. There are now 6 active REC bishops serving in the USA. Bp. Bill Jenkins became number 6 when he was consecrated as Bishop Coadjutor for the Diocese of Northeast and MidAtlantic in April. Bp Bill had served as rector of Faith REC in Baltimore for over 30 years. The Bishops are also in the process of electing a Missionary Bishop of Cuba. Further details regarding that process are forthcoming. Overall, the REC Bishops' working relationships are superb, and we are good friends. Please continue pray for us!

- B. General Council and BFM: I serve as Vice-president of the General Council and Board of Foreign Missions and as a member of the General Committee. I participated in various meetings via zoom as well related sub-committee zoom meetings and calls and of course had a small role in our General Council in Charleston.

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XV. ACNA relations

- A. I participated in College of Bishops meetings in January/June, and the ACNA Provincial Council in June. I also participated in several meetings via zoom.

- B. The REC bishops agree that is important for us to maintain our association with the ACNA. It provides us with a “place at the table” with other traditional Anglicans. Our sub-jurisdiction status within the ACNA allows us to maintain our male-only clergy stance while developing healthy relationships with other like-minded Anglicans.

XVI. Last Section...Regarding my retirement

- A. I turned 73 in September. According to our Canons,

Upon attaining the age of seventy-five years of age a Minister shall be considered to have tendered his resignation each year on the anniversary of his birth, and such shall be deemed to have been accepted unless affirmatively rejected by a majority of the Vestry, Standing Committee, or General Committee to which the resignation must be offered.

- B. I have spoken with the Standing Committee about this, and in accordance with our Constitutions and Canons plan to tender my resignation on September 12, 2025 (my 75th birthday) with an actual retirement date of December 31, 2025. My announcement today officially sets in motion the process for electing a new bishop coadjutor for DCS who will take my

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place when I retire. The Bishop Coadjutor will assume the office of Bishop Ordinary on January 1, 2026.

C. REC bishops are members of the ACNA College of Bishops and have agreed to coordinate our process for electing a bishop with those of the College. In concert with Adn Thompson and Standing Committee president Josiah Jones, I began the first step in the process which involved securing approval to conduct an election from the Executive Committee of the ACNA College of Bishops. This approval must be obtained BEFORE any announcement can be made by a diocese seeking to elect a new bishop. The approval is based upon a Sustainability Report attesting to the viability of a diocese by reporting the ASA, the number of active clergy, and a profile of the diocesan finances including the ability of the diocese to support another bishop. I wish we had more than 20 parishes which is borderline for the measure of sustainability, but overall our parishes are healthy and our finances are very strong, and we did indeed receive the endorsement and blessing of the ACNA Executive Committee to proceed with our election.

1. So, we have our announcement, we have our approval, we can now enter into the deeper waters of preparing for and conducting an election. Adn. Thompson has outlined a nomination and election process for our diocese which fulfills

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REC and ACNA Canons. It is included in the report documents, so I won't discuss all the details here. It is important to note, however, that the process calls for a Search Committee to be formed by November, so over the next few weeks, the Standing Committee and I will form a Search Committee of 8 members as profiled in the "Nomination and Election Process" document. They will then be tasked with certain preliminary activities listed in the process document, in preparation for their formal commissioning as Search Committee on January 1, 2024. From that date, their assignment is to produce a list of from 3-5 nominees by March 31, 2024. The goal is to have an election in May 2024 and a new Bishop coadjutor consecrated at our 2024 synod. Pray for us!

2. This schedule will allow for a year-plus transition season before the new coadjutor assumes the role of ordinary on Jan 1, 2026. I did mention to the Standing Committee that I might be interested in serving an additional year beyond my retirement date with their endorsement...retiring Dec. 2026 instead of Dec. 2025. One of the advantages of doing so would be to provide a longer runway for the new bishop. He will have a parish to care for and lead through its own transition while he also begins assisting me within the

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diocese. The extra time could be beneficial. Again, please pray for us!

3. I will discuss with the Standing Committee ways in which we can communicate the activities and progress of the Search Committee to our rectors and parishes. I want to keep everyone well-informed throughout the process. I know there will be questions. I refer you to the Nominations and Election Process Document which should provide most answers.

A final thought in light of our 150th anniversary;

Everyone has agreed that we had a encouraging and blessed General Council this past June celebrating our 150th anniversary. By the grace of God, we've endured, persevered and stood the test of time.

Last month I was invited to participate in the events associated with the consecration of Good Shepherd REC in Easton, MA., part of the Diocese of the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic. The consecration was on Saturday evening...I was honored to give the sermon on Sunday morning...the first in the newly consecrated church building. Bishop Gillin presided at the consecration and Bp. Jenkins and Adn. Abboud also participated in the weekend celebrations. The congregation was finally able to purchase their own building after 30 years...a lovely place. The

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rector, Rev. Eduardo Andrade, has been with the congregation the entire 30 years, and what was particularly poignant for me was my own connection and history with Eduardo. We were part of the same non-denominational ministry **over forty years ago**. While we only had minimal contact with each other during those days...I was in Ohio, he was in Massachusetts...Rev. Eduardo became an important contact and guide as I made my way from the non-denominational world into the REC. He entered the REC in 1990's, I entered in 2000. We caught up with each other at General Council where he invited me to attend the consecration of his parish's new church building, and I gave the first Sunday sermon in the newly consecrated church 3 weeks ago. **And I thought: "I am so grateful for the REC!"**

I know we've had and still have our problems, but a stubborn faithfulness to the Scriptures, to the Book of Common Prayer...to episcopacy and to godly living has enabled our church to endure...to persevere...and as a result to provide a way for many like Eduardo and me to find our way back to the historic Church, her Creeds and her worship. The movement he and I were a part of was at one time large and vibrant but is no longer in existence...many of the pastors serving within that movement are no longer in ministry.... And three weeks ago, here were

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Eduardo and I, 40+ years and still serving in the church...consecrating a church building together...and all of it as a result of the ministry and faithfulness of the REC, and especially Bp. Grote, who took us in!

Bp. Sutton provided an excellent address at our synod...opening the door to the next year and the next 150 years. I encourage every clergyman to reread it. He reminded us that God is greater...greater than whatever may come our way...“What can separate us from the love of God” is how St. Paul put it. God is greater, and as we remain stubbornly connected to Him through the Scriptures and the ministry and worship of His Church, we likewise become greater than whatever challenges, temptations, and persecutions the culture surrounding us may bring. Connected to Him we are connected to each other, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against us.

Thank you for your prayers and your faithfulness. I especially thank my wife, Janice for her constant patience, counsel, encouragement, and love.

Respectfully submitted,

+Peter Manto

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