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- I. **Presiding Bishop Sutton, Bishop Grote, Diocesan clergy and wives, lay delegates and invited guests**, it is wonderful to be together again here in Mason, Ohio to conduct our 18th diocesan synod. Number 17 was especially significant as we chose our Bishop Coadjutor and next Bishop Ordinary, Jason Grote right here at Trinity Church Mason. Along with selecting Jason as our next bishop, the synod was particularly memorable for me because of the orderly, respectful yet serious and careful way in which we conducted ourselves throughout the process. I am grateful for everyone who had a part in planning and overseeing the election last year and all the activities and planning related to that day. I also commend all those in attendance that day for the prayerful, gracious, patient way in which everything was accomplished...some good and grateful memories of our 17th Synod, October 2024; and now it's on to number 18 and the beginning of this season of transition for our diocese.

- A. Thank you, **Trinity REC** for again hosting this year's synod and for the help your parish, vestry and volunteers...especially Dss. Michelle Caldwell and Fr. Jeff and Jodie Hubbard...have so graciously provided.
- B. Welcome **Presiding Bp Sutton**. It is an honor and joy to have you with us again. It is always a blessings to hear you preach and absorb what you have to say to us. We look forward to our afternoon session with you at the hotel meeting room.

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- C. Welcome **fellow diocesan clergy and wives**. My time as Bishop Ordinary is winding down, and Janice and I are grateful for your friendship, prayers, and partnership in this honored and blessed Gospel ministry over these past five-plus years especially. We have felt it and experienced a steady stream of warm welcomes, kind words, delicious meals, great conversation, serious planning and strategizing, fervent prayers and genuine encouragement as you received us into your parishes, your homes and your lives. Janice and I want to find ways to keep up with those relationships which have become so precious to us.
- D. 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 caring for the needs, both ministerial and personal, of our clergy families and for your concern for their well-being as they labor in God's harvest. The relationships Janice and I have developed with all the lay members of the diocese are likewise precious to us, and we hope to continue to see you all after our retirement as well.
- E. A special welcome this year to our **Bishop Coadjutor Jason Grote**, his first synod as Bishop in our diocese. Bp. Jason's gifts, training, experience, and devotion to our Lord have already begun to add new depth and quality to our diocesan

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ministry. He has taken on roles overseeing the postulants, leading the planning of this year's synod, and making some episcopal visits. He has eight confirmations this coming Sunday at Christ the King, Dayton. Since his election, Bp Jason has been a valuable advisor, partner and friend to me in our diocesan ministry. I look forward to working with him during this transition season and doing all we can to move our diocese forward in accomplishing all our Lord has prepared for us to do.

- F. And welcome **guests**, we are glad to have you with us. If you have questions, please ask and we will do our best 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.
- II. I will complete my sixth year as Ordinary in December, and I am particularly grateful to the all the clergy and members of the Diocese of the Central States for the ongoing trust you have placed in me and for the many expressions of prayer and encouragement Janice and I have received from you over the past year. Please continue to pray for us and for our diocese as we move forward in ministering in our Central States region. I have divided my activities report for the past 12 months into three sections: DCS, REC, ACNA.

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III. First and longest, the **Diocese of the Central States**. Again, this is our 18th synod, and there are currently 22 parishes and missions in our diocese covering eight states with at least one parish in seven of the eight...and yes, we're still waiting for West Virginia!

A. In my role as Ordinary, I made 44 visits over the last twelve month term within the diocese. Of those, 15 were Episcopal visits with confirmations, vestry meetings, and all. I have always appreciated the warm and gracious welcome I have received each time. I conducted **51** confirmations and received **35** new members during those visits...so our diocese is growing...our network of influence is increasing...our trajectory continues on an upward path. Be encouraged, people **are** being added to our fellowship day by day!

1. Regarding Confirmation, clergy please continue to promote Confirmation in your parishes and prepare people to be confirmed. As I have been telling members, Confirmation is about dealing/interacting with the Bishop and as a result dealing/interacting with the Church through the ages. At Confirmation, Bishops, representatives of the Apostles, through the laying on of hands communicate that very personal touch each member has with the Church reaching back to her earliest days as well as the very personal

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welcome each person receives as a member of the Body of Christ. Confirmation: very personal, very tactile, very real!

2. In addition to the 15 Episcopal visits, I also made 29 other visits within the diocese for various meetings, some combined with scheduled Episcopal visits.

a) These other visits included **several clergy transitions**:

- (1) **Two ordinations 1)** Fr. Jameson Lowery, now assisting Fr. Edgerton at Church of the Redeemer, Wilson, NC, and **2)** Dcn. Lucas Stock, now serving at All Saints, Lynchburg (correct report-not Richmond).

- (2) **Three transfers into our diocese: 1)** Fr. Robert Hudson, retired and assisting at St. Luke's, Maysville, Ky; **2)** Fr. Gerald McDermott-scholar, author, professor at RE Seminary. When not traveling and speaking, Fr. McDermott assists at Holy Cross Anglican Church in Crozet, VA, an ACNA parish near his home; **3)** Fr. Alex Marlowe, our church planter in Johnson City, TN, and to assist Fr. Alex with the plant there I licensed Fr. Mike DuCharme, a retired army chaplain from the Jurisdiction of the Armed Forces and Chaplaincy living in Johnson City.

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- (3) **One institution 1)** I instituted Fr. Damien Grout as Vicar of St. Paul's Anglican in Lexington, VA.
- (4) **One funeral 1)** I attended the funeral of Fr. Marc Clauson...Fr. Marc died suddenly and held a unique place among our clergy. Fr. Marc was received into our diocese by Bp. Morse during the first few years of our existence and remained an active clergyman on our diocesan roster. He was a professor for many years at Cedarville University, and was particularly helpful to Fr. McNamara by directing students asking questions about Anglicanism to him and Christ the King parish where several of Fr. Marc's former students still attend,,,postulant Jacob Harris was a student of Fr. Marc.

b) And for other visits within the diocese:

- (1) **I received** a new mission parish, Christ Church, Florence, KY. I formally received them this past Sunday. The mission came to us from the Anglican Province of America. They have had several interactions with Trinity Mason over the past few years. I have known the current vicar, Fr. John Longcamp, for over 20 years. When Fr. John called to inquire about transferring, one of the things he said to me was, "We're lonely!" Their

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bishop resided in Texas, and there weren't any APA parishes near Florence, Kentucky. We are delighted to receive our third Kentucky mission, and welcome them into our fellowship!

- (2) **I attended** services at four of our Ohio and Indiana parishes during Holy Week.
- (3) **I attended** the Ohio Valley Clericus in March and Piedmont Clericus in May. I asked Bp. Jason to serve as the featured speaker and basically tell his "how-I-got-here story" for both sessions. He was honest and clear, and did a fabulous job.
- (4) **I presided** at the funeral of Jeremy Houser (age 38), son of Fr. Scott and Cathy Houser in Birmingham, AL. Tragically, Fr. Scott's son Jason (age 41) died five months later when Janice and I were away on vacation. Janice and I have been in touch with Fr. Scott and Cathy, and they are making their way through by the grace of God and with the support of their family and the St. John's parish.
- (5) **I spoke** at the funeral service of Jim Pickup, craftsman and beloved friend who built the cathedra (bishop's chair) for Trinity after my consecration as bishop. He

also made 2 chancel chairs and the kneelers! We all miss him very much here at Trinity.

3. **I also participated in numerous zoom meetings**, some listed on my activities report others not. Of particular note were sessions discussing plans to extend the St. Lazarus ministry. I think most are familiar with this work founded by Fr. Chris and Carol Herman. I proposed expanding it to develop a ministry-model for export to our parishes and eventually to other REC diocese and beyond. Each parish has a large, spiritually unattended group of aging, frail, needy individuals residing in nursing homes and senior care facilities within their locale, and their numbers are rapidly increasing. Fr. Chris and Carol, who have been at this for 30 years, have developed a unique way of ministering to these folks by starting Anglican parishes within the facilities. Fr. Chris has been recruited by Fuller Seminary for their D. Minn program for his innovative ideas in this regard. He is essentially producing the manual for this ministry- model for his doctoral project. Fr. Chris will share some details later. For now, with the blessing of the Standing Committee, we have established a task force to develop these ideas within our diocese. We have named the project the Society of St. Lazarus Churches. Stay tuned.

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- B. Diocesan and Parish health:** There are currently 22 parishes and missions in DCS, and overall our parishes continue to grow. Last year at synod, I expressed my hope that our Average Sunday Attendance would exceed 1,000 before I retire. Our ASA was 915 in 2023, 983 in 2024 and and praise God, we attained an ASA of 1,007 for our synod reports this year! As I like to point out, that's a 43% increase from the ASA of 575 during the 2020 COVID decline, my first year as Ordinary. So keep up the good work...baptizing and making disciples! ...and rectors, please continue to keep good records and maintain your parish registers. They provide valuable information for use in evaluating the condition of our diocese as well as preserving an important historical record of your church.
1. We have two Deaneries in our diocese, Ohio Valley and Piedmont. We decided to use the term "deaneries" instead of "convocations" as in the past because the former was more in line with the practice among the other REC dioceses...a change made in name only, not in function. The Deanery structure provides another avenue for clergy to interact and strategize concerning their shared ministry region and to encourage one another. The Piedmont Convocation holds a quarterly half-day clericus and the Ohio Valley holds a bi-annual overnight clericus. I encourage clergy from each deanery to plan on attending these

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refreshing and edifying gatherings of fellow clergy from your geographic region. Of special note: this year's fall/winter Ohio Valley clericus will be held in conjunction with the Christ the Redeemer Men's retreat at St. Meinrad's Monastery in Indiana...December 5-6. The event speaker, Fr. Gerry McDermott is leading several sessions focused on establishing patterns of family worship based upon the rhythms of the Church's liturgical year. Men from throughout the diocese are invited to attend, and especially Ohio Valley clergy are reminded that these sessions are this year's Ohio Valley Clericus. See Fr. Goodwin or Fr. Kline for more details.

2. I received two new postulants this term, Mason Sawyer, All Saints, Raleigh, NC; and Jacob Harris, Christ the King, Dayton, OH. Two others discontinued their postulancies: Jonathan McGill, and Noah Elkins. There are now six active postulants. A number of them are with us for this week's synod. Our postulants wear a clerical collar with a black line on the front...be sure to greet them and encourage them in their studies and express your appreciation and prayers for them as they navigate the discernment process for ordained ministry.
3. So our active clergy roster consists of 2 bishops, 29 presbyters, 4 deacons and 6 postulants, along with 3 set-

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apart as deaconesses for a total of 44 individuals (ordained, set-apart, and postulants) resident in our diocese and actively working in Gospel ministry. We always emphasize praying for more laborers in the harvest, and God continues to answer our prayers! Remember to pray: Increase of Ministry: p. 60.

- a) It is also important to note that there are 11 retired clergy resident within our diocese. Five of these have been able to assist with ministry activities in various ways, some regularly, others as needs have arisen over the past year.
- b) Regarding retired clergy, we added one name to the list during the past term. With sadness, admiration, and deep affection, I accepted the retirement of our beloved Adn Scott Thompson. Adn. Scott played a major role in the birth and development of our diocese. He was directly involved in: two church plants- Trinity, Chantilly and St. Jude's, Richmond; two parish transfers into our diocese- Our Saviour, Leesburg and St. Paul's, Lexington; and was an invaluable advisor, confidante and friend to me through the first five years of my tenure as Ordinary. He is home, fully recovered from recent knee replacement and enjoying his retirement. He and Mary Jane are still active members of St. Jude's, Richmond. I spoke with him Monday and he sent us this greetings: READ

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4. Regarding Church Planting, we currently have two active REC 100 church plants. 1) Trinity Anglican in Connersville, IN, Fr. Richard Tarsitano, Planter/Vicar. Trinity's REC 100 grant came to an end of last year, and the parish/plant is doing well, learning to fly/soar on their own! I am scheduled to make an episcopal visit there next month with 4 confirmations scheduled. I conducted 15 there last year! 2) Johnson City Mission, Fr. Alex Marlowe. Fr. Alex transferred into DCS in February, moved to Johnson City in June, and is currently meeting with 45 people, so the work there is off to a great start...even before their yet-to-be-determined launch date. As I mentioned, Fr. Mike DuCharme is assisting with that plant. 3) Finally, on a sad note, we decided to close our Darke County Mission church plant in Ansonia, Ohio. Fr. Andrew Costa gave it his best, and after some early success, attendance was hurt as several key families transferred to the RCC. Fr. Andrew is a good and gifted clergyman. He, wife Heather and family are praying and regrouping, and I have begun discussing several ministry opportunities in our diocese with Fr. Andrew. We don't expect to bat 1,000 on these plants. We're ever seeking to learn and grow from every experience. While not throwing caution to the wind, we do intend to keep planting. Bp. Grote will have further details in his REC 100 report.

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5. Regarding Church Schools: There are three schools located in our diocese: Dominion Academy, a ministry of Christ the King, Dayton, OH; Hunter Classical School, an REC diocesan school in Richmond, VA, and New Covenant School in Lynchburg, VA which is governed by an independent board and maintains an affiliation with the REC through our Diocese. By all accounts these schools are doing well. Hunter and New Covenant have begun the process significantly expand their schools' attendance, facilities and mission.

C. Regarding other diocesan activities:

1. I meet with the Standing Committee and Trustees and have had interaction with various appointed committees in managing the business of the diocese. Discussions are lively, respectful and productive. I am very grateful for everyone's willingness to serve and for the gifts they bring to the table. I value the camaraderie and working relationship I have with both our elected and appointed committees. Each group will present their reports today.
 - a) Our Chancellor, Fr. Bill Barto has been especially helpful to me in sorting through the details and issues facing these various church committees, as well as the policies and legal matters affecting the diocese. He has a

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presentation for us at tomorrow's session regarding a couple of these matters.

2. I also would like to thank our deaconesses Michelle Caldwell, Teresa Johnson and Shelly Flemming. Each of them are devoted to our Lord and His Church and active in serving their parishes and assisting with diocesan needs and issues. Please give special honor to these ladies and take special care of them as they endeavor to care for us.
3. Our administrative Secretary, 'Mary Bailey now **Kozel**' has provided invaluable and superior service to me and our Diocese over the past five years. Mary retired in September, and to everyone's surprise required triple bypass surgery just last week! After a successful surgery, she is resting comfortably at home where her husband of one year, Nick Kozel, is attending to her every need. I am pleased to announce that we were able fill the Administrative Assistant position. Micha (Tricia-Misha) Merhout (mer...howt) began working for us on October 1, and is with us this morning (please stand!) Misha hails from Richmond, Virginia, and holds a BA in English and French from James **Madison** University and an MBA from the University of Richmond. She and her husband, Jeff, a professor at Miami of Ohio University, are the parents of three adult children.

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4. Finally, with the help of my dear wife, Janice, I have produced the monthly diocesan newsletter, “By Way of DCS.” It offers a glimpse of our various parishes through pictures and updates primarily from my Episcopal visits along with sermon excerpts. We hope they’ve been helpful.

IV. Next section: Reformed Episcopal Church meetings and events

A. REC **Council of Bishops**

1. I attended a two-day REC Bishops meeting in Dallas and participated in two half-day REC Bishop’s meetings via zoom. I am in regular communication with Bp. Sutton and the other REC Bishops. I attended the 25th anniversary of Bp. Sutton’s consecration last October. The REC bishops’ working relationships are superb. Whenever we are together, attending various meetings in-person, we make it a point to have some time together and update one another on our diocesan work. Please continue pray for us!
2. I was a co-consecrator for the consecration service of our new diocesan Bishop Coadjutor Jason Grote at Holy Communion, Dallas. It was a glorious and significant day in the life of our diocese. The day was preceded by a clergy and wives “Festa Italiana” dinner celebrating our callings and shared diocesan ministry while giving thanks to our Lord for adding Bishop Jason to our fellowship. Plans call for Bishop

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Jason to be formally installed as Diocesan Ordinary at General Council in June 2026. Bp. Jason and I will then switch roles in July 2026 when I will assume an assisting/part-time role leading to my retirement at the end of the year.

3. I was honored to be the preacher for the Service of Institution for Bp. Bill Jenkins, new Ordinary for the Diocese of Northeast and MidAtlantic at Cummins Memorial in Maryland. With retirements and additions, there are currently 8 active REC Bishops...lean and mean if you ask me!
4. We did have some sad news regarding REC bishops during this past term. Bp. Leonard Riches, former REC Presiding Bishop and Bp. Al Gadsden former Bishop Ordinary of the Diocese of the Southeast passed away with weeks of each other. I was able to attend both funerals for these devoted servants of our Lord and faithful leaders in our Church.

B. **REC General Council:** I serve as Vice-president of the General Council and as a member of the General Committee. I participated in all the bi-annual General Committee Meetings via zoom as well related sub-committee zoom meetings and calls.

- a) Our diocese is hosting the REC General Council from June 8-12, 2026 in Richmond, VA. Bp. Jason's investiture as Ordinary will be a highlight. I ask parishes to make

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special plans, financial and otherwise, to send lay delegates as well as their clergy to the General Council.

- b) In this regard, I propose holding our 2026 diocesan synod early, one day before General Council in Richmond. Concerns have already been raised about costs of participating in both General Council and DCS synod in 2026. Combining the two will be a savings in both time and money, and we will still be able to meet in-person rather than zoom. We can adapt our business to accommodate the earlier schedule.

C. I serve as VP for the **Board of Foreign Missions** and took part in two committee meetings via zoom. Fr. Bob Gresser will provide a BFM update later.

D. I'm delighted **Bp. Sutton** is with us. He will provide his insights and an update on our beloved REC after lunch today.

V. Last section: ACNA relations

A. ACNA Bishops:

- 1. I travelled to Charleston to attend the Investiture of Bp. Steve Wood as Archbishop of the ACNA but was unable to attend the service due to flight problems (Do you know there is a difference between A.M. and P.M.? I thought I did!)

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While in Charleston, I was able to visit with Bishops Gadsden, White and Hill and their wives, a delightful time.

2. I attended the annual in-person week-long Bishops' meeting in January where Bp. Jason's election was unanimously confirmed, and I attended the two-day Bishops' meeting in June. I also participated in two zoom sessions regarding the Jurisdiction of Armed Forces.

B. Regarding our ongoing membership within the ACNA, the REC bishops agree that we should maintain our association and role within the ACNA House of Bishops. As members of the House, we have a "place at the table" with other traditional Anglicans and the opportunity to maintain our witness and influence within that body. The Women's ordination issues remain. Our sub-jurisdiction status within the ACNA allows us to maintain our settled, male-only clergy stance while developing healthy relationships with other like-minded Anglicans. We are aware of the tensions and disagreements but please don't underestimate the value of our witness and participation in ACNA and the opportunities as a result.

VI. Personal note, I was invited to speak at the 40th anniversary of the Christian school I served as founder and administrator, Bowling Green Christian Academy in BG, Ohio. Forty years later, and the school is thriving and in the midst of a building project. It

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was a great blessing and honor for Janice and me to have been invited and a delight to be reunited with treasured Christian friends from our past.

VII. In conclusion, I especially thank my wife, Janice for her patience, encouragement, and love. She has been able to travel with me on some visits and trips which has been a blessing to me and by all accounts to all the parishes/people we have visited.

VIII. Final thought: I came across this quote from Alexander Solzhenitsyn: *Nothing worthwhile can be built on a neglect of higher meanings...**Nothing worthwhile can be built on a neglect of higher meanings**...* My dear brothers and sisters and especially fellow clergy, we are the light of the world, and Solzhenitsyn's phrase is at the heart of the message we bring to expose the darkness currently blinding men's eyes: "Friend/neighbor, *nothing worthwhile can be built on a neglect of higher meanings*. All the distractions, all the alluring temptations, all the mockery and cynicism...Friend/neighbor, *turn down the sound, shut down the screen, stop pointing fingers, come into the house of God and draw near to listen rather than offer the sacrifices of fools...**nothing worthwhile can be built on a neglect of higher meanings**...* may we say it, teach it, preach it, live it wherever we go.

IX. Respectfully submitted,

+Peter Manto