



Episcopal Address to the Synod
of
The Anglican Diocese of the West
(United States & Canada)

By

The Rt. Rev'd Dr. Felix C. Orji, OSB
Diocesan Bishop
The Anglican Diocese of the West
(CONNAM: United States & Canada)

Delivered at the Eighth Annual Synod
The Anglican Diocese of the West
October 23-24, 2020
Houston, Texas
United States of America

“But now Christ is the end of the law; the road ends at his feet, and here his righteousness is offered to everyone who believes. It is to that place, to Jesus only, that God has wanted to drive you with all your unrest and anguish of soul.”

– Bishop Bo Giertz (Swedish Lutheran Bishop and Theologian), Book - Hammer of God

“Our love grows soft if it is not strengthened by truth, and our truth grows hard if it is not softened by love.”

– Dr. John Stott

““The end of the Word of God is to save, and therefore we term it the word of life. The way for all men and women to be saved is by the knowledge of that truth which the word hath taught. To this end the word of God no otherwise serveth than only in the nature of a doctrinal instrument. It saveth because it maketh ‘wise to salvation’.”

– Richard Hooker (Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity, Book V)

“People often do not live what they profess, but they will always live what they believe.”

– Tim Warner

“I wish it need not have happened in my time,” said Frodo.

“So do I,” said Gandalf, “and so do all who live to see such times. But that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us.”

– J.R.R. Tolkien, The Fellowship of the Ring (The Lord of the Rings, #1)

“The longest and the most torturous road in life begins with the choice of cutting corners, rejection of honest paths, refusing to humbly learn from godly models, arrogance, and love for dishonesty.”

– Archbishop Ben Kwashi

“We do not want, as the newspapers say, a Church that will move with the world. We want a Church that will move the world.”

– G.K. Chesterton

Let us pray:

For the Diocese

O God, by Your grace You have called us in this Diocese to a goodly and godly fellowship of faith. Bless our Bishops and other Clergy, and all lay people. Grant that Your Word may be truly preached and truly heard, and that Your Sacraments be faithfully administered and faithfully received. By Your Spirit, fashion our lives according to the example of Your Son and grant that we may show the power of Your love to all among whom we live, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

A Warm Welcome!

“Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.”
2 Peter 1:2. *Amen.*

It is my pleasure to welcome you all to this Eighth Synod of The Anglican Diocese of the West!

I must first give all thanks to God our Father for His eternal love for us; to our Lord Jesus Christ for dying on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins; and to the Holy Spirit for convicting us of our sin, for drawing us to penitent faith in Christ, and for empowering us to serve God in holiness and righteousness. To God be the glory and praise for everything He has done and will continue to do for us in this Diocese. *Amen.*

I thank our children, and especially my wife, Mama West, for her unwavering love, patience, and support. It is huge responsibility to be married to a Bishop. Our gratitude extends to all our Suffragan Bishops, Diocesan Officers, Synod Planning Committee, and Speakers for the donation of their many hours of service to this Diocese; to the Clergy of this Diocese for their tireless labor; to the Diocesan Knights and Ladies, and to the Diocesan Laity; to my mentor, Archbishop Ephraim Ademowo; and to the distinguished ladies and gentlemen and other friends of the Diocese who are our guests today. Many of you have exceeded all expectations this year. Your prayers and support have been instruments in the hands of God for the good of our Diocese and the work of our Diocese. Thank you all from the bottom of our hearts!

We are grateful to our new Primate, The Most Rev'd Henry Chukwudum Ndukuba, for his wisdom, attentiveness, pastoral care, and gracious guidance to us since taking office in late March of this year, and we look forward to working with him in the establishment of God's reign in the Church and our world.

As a Diocese, we also want to express our sincere thanks to our retired Primate, The Most Rev'd Dr. Nicholas D. Okoh, for his leadership and encouragement to us while he was our Primate. We pray that God will keep him, his wife, and their children safe, healthy, and in peace as they enjoy his retirement. *Amen.*

It is sadly obvious that we live today in a very strange world – a world that is extremely difficult to describe. Our world is embattled by a dangerous viral pandemic, angry political partisanship, racism, tribal conflicts, violence and destruction in our cities, tribal genocide, moral laxity, disregard for the poor and disenfranchised, religious persecution and murder of Christians in Nigeria and other nations, loss of jobs, and social upheaval affecting relationships in our families and churches as well as the unity, worship, and mission of the Church itself. On top of all these troubles, there appears to be an unwillingness among many to seek the truth, to live the truth, and to speak the truth on political, religious, and social issues. This is terribly unfortunate – even tragic – in a civilized and upwardly mobile society with Christian roots. Our current situation reminds me of the conversation between Frodo and Gandalf in J.R.R. Tolkien's novel, "The Fellowship of the Ring" (The Lord of the Rings, #1):

"I wish it need not have happened in my time," said Frodo.

"So do I," said Gandalf, "and so do all who live to see such times. But that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us."

We must deliberately respond to our present situation with faith in God, hope in His promise, and love for one another. We must respond by proclaiming the Gospel of Christ that brings hope and peace: peace with God, peace in our hearts, and peace with one another as we navigate our way in times such as these. We must endeavor to know the truth, speak the truth, and live the truth. In a time of universal deceit, being truthful is a revolutionary act, says George Orwell. Let's start a truth revolution in our society by living in accordance with the Word of God.

The rate of COVID-19 infection is still high in North America. Consequently, we call on everyone to utilize all precautionary measures already in place, such as physical (social) distancing, regular hand-washing, and use of face masks and alcohol-based hand sanitizers. Shelby Condo has rightly said,

"2020 has been a stressful year. We've been placed in situations we didn't ask for, we've experienced hardships we never imagined, and we've seen things we never thought we would. But we learned God will never leave us. We are only here through His mercy and grace and I am a believer that He will bring us through."

We are grateful to God that to date, no member of this Diocese has lost his or her life to the pandemic, and we pray that by the mercy of God, none of us will! In Jesus's name, *Amen*. That is our sincere petition to God. We can trust God knowing that He is a God who answers prayer, a miracle-working God whose gracious plans for His people never fail – even when they do not deserve it (which is 100% of the time)!

Our deepest condolences extend to each of you who has lost loved ones to this pandemic or from any other cause. May the Lord comfort you and give you peace.

The Primate of the Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion)

On behalf of the Diocese, I want to congratulate and welcome our new Archbishop, Metropolitan, and Primate of All Nigeria, The Most Rev'd Henry Chukwudum Ndukuba. He is a gentle, godly, intelligent, sensitive, and pastorally responsive Primate. He is an evangelist and a missionary who has sacrificed and risked his life for the sake of the Gospel. Our Primate is a humble, spiritually dynamic, profound Bible teacher, and powerful expositor of the Word of God. I am personally encouraged by the order, discipline, and commitment to Gospel ministry that have marked his Primatial leadership since assuming office on March 25 of this year. The Church of Nigeria has 14 Archbishops, 14 Provinces, 163 Dioceses, and 175 Bishops with over 10,000 parishes filled with roughly 22 million Anglicans! In the past ten years the Church of Nigeria has added 27 new dioceses and 15 missionary dioceses. In case it hasn't dawned on you, there is a tremendous weight of responsibility on the shoulders of our new Primate and his wife, Mama Angela Ndukuba. Please keep them in your prayers because this immense responsibility requires divine grace, wisdom, and power – with *much* prayer and perseverance. Appropriately, Archbishop Ndukuba has declared his primatial tenure as the “Decade of the Reign of God.” He has dedicated his leadership to promote and further the reign of God in our churches and nations around the world through the proclamation of the Gospel with integrity and discipline. May the Lord our God grant him that desire, in Jesus's Name. *Amen*.

Suffragan Bishops of the Diocese

The Anglican Diocese of the West has two Suffragan Bishops, Bishop Scott Seely and Bishop Celestine Ironna. They were consecrated on March 21, 2020, at Holy Trinity Cathedral in Lokoja, Kogi State, Nigeria, by the former Primate of the Church of Nigeria, The Most Rev'd Dr. Nicholas D. Okoh. Their role as Suffragan Bishops is to assist me in my role as Diocesan Bishop of The Anglican Diocese of the West (United States & Canada). “Suffragan Bishops” are

assisting Bishops without ecclesiastical jurisdictions of their own. I am very pleased for them to join me in shouldering responsibility for the administration of this Diocese I have served, by God's grace and with your kind help, for more than eight years. Please join me in congratulating them!

The primary role of our two Suffragan Bishops, in addition to assisting with the administration of the Diocese, is to facilitate church-planting in the Regions assigned to them. These regional assignments are not jurisdictional and are subject to change as circumstances may dictate. To this end, Suffragan Bishops do not make preferments or perform investitures of Knights. They can perform confirmations and make parish visits at the direction of the Diocesan Bishop and, possibly, perform ordinations at the direction of both the Diocesan Bishop and the Primate, when and if the Primate grants them permission to do so.

For mission purposes, here are the geographical areas where each of our Suffragans will be assisting me:

Suffragan Bishop Celestine Ironna

Southeast

Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Tennessee, Kentucky, Georgia, Florida, North Carolina, South Carolina, West Virginia, Virginia, Delaware, Maryland

Northeast

Pennsylvania, New York, Vermont, New Hampshire, Maine, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New Jersey, Connecticut

Canada

Persian Gulf

Suffragan Bishop Scott Seely

Pacific

Washington, Oregon, California

Rocky Mountains

Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, Nevada, Utah, Colorado

Southwest

Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, Oklahoma

Midwest

North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio

South Africa

May the Lord empower our Suffragan Bishops, along with their wives, Miriam Seely and Caroline Ironna, to serve with humility and joy!

It is presently unclear whether we will receive any additional Suffragan Bishops. I trust that in due course, clarity will emerge and permit both the enhancement of our Diocesan ministry and the expansion of our evangelistic mission.

New Clergy

Please join me in welcoming the following clergy to our Diocese:

Venerable Kenneth Olebara
Venerable Dr. Shola Falodun
Venerable Dr. David Jayeola
Venerable Henry Okechukwu Chima
Venerable Patrick Nwakalor
Venerable Pascal Uchenna Okwara
Venerable Dr David Ozuzu
Rev'd Canon Bolaji Ebenezer
Rev'd Canon Cornelius Ali
Rev'd Canon Oluwatosin Onaseso
Rev'd Canon David Nwanekpe
Rev'd Clark Cornelius
Rev'd Charles Miller

Rev'd Uzoma Ebiriekwe
Rev Ogo Onwumelu
Rev'd Emeka Abanno

God has blessed us with the fellowship of these godly men. They are here to join us in carrying out the mission of the Diocese, which is to make disciples of all nations for Jesus Christ. Our call is to plunder Hell as we draw men and women to Christ and into His Kingdom. This is why from year to year our Diocesan motto remains "to make disciples of all nations for Christ," and everything we do is directed toward achieving that goal. And as Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones said, "We preach not to fill our churches, but to save sinners from Hell, and the two are not the same." Go get the sinners for Christ!

Ordinations

The following individuals were ordained or became postulants in the past year:

Deacons

Rev'd Christian Chukwubueze Anyanwueze
Rev'd Chidebem Davidson Nwosu
Rev'd Emma Uzoma Oheri
Rev'd Samuel Chidi Ihekwoaba
Rev'd Jesse Tyler Barkalow

Priests

Rev'd Dr. Kelvin Okwonna

Postulants

Brian Sears
Benson Ndubuisi
Godwin Ezekwuba
John Mack
Ifeanyi Azubike
Israel Olaleru
Prince Ucheagwa
Samson Nwanekwu

Augustine Enweliku
Uzochukwu Ibe

Diocesan Appointments

Over the past year, the following Diocesan appointments were made:

Venerable Dr. Shola Falodun was appointed Regional Archdeacon for Louisiana;
Venerable Dr. Kenneth Olebara was appointed Regional Archdeacon for Virginia;
Venerable Samuel Ugwuneri was appointed Regional Archdeacon for the Persian Gulf;
Rev'd Canon Patrick Chinweuba was appointed Diocesan Prayer Ministry Coordinator;
Rev'd Canon Tosin Onaseso was appointed Diocesan IT Advisor;
Rev'd Folusho Kolawole was appointed Diocesan Director of Social Media Ministry;
Rev'd Canon Dr Olusegun Adebogun was appointed Canon Missioner for Canada;
Rev'd Dr. Rob Goodman was appointed Diocesan Spiritual Director;
Rev'd Barry Kowald was appointed Minister General for The Society of St. Benedict (SSB);
Sir Dr. Okey Dike was appointed Chancellor for the Houston Cathedral; and
Mr. Henry Nnabugwu was appointed a Diocesan legal officer.

New Diocesan Policies

1. Vesting by Non-Stipendiary Clergy

“All Clergy who are not employed and remunerated by a parish Vestry or the Diocese (that is, all ‘non-stipendiary Clergy’) are ‘volunteers,’ and should sit in the congregation (with their spouses, if applicable) during church services. They may wear clerical shirts if they desire. No such volunteer Clergy (Honorary Clergy) may wear altar vestments in church or participate as a member of the altar party for church services unless requested to do so by the current Rector.”
(See page 23, Diocesan Customary)

2. Vesting by Retired Clergy

“All retired Clergy should sit in the congregation (with their spouses, if applicable) during church services and may wear clerical shirts if they desire. No retired Clergy may wear altar vestments in church or participate as a member of the altar party for church services unless requested to do so by the current Rector.” (See page 24, Diocesan Customary). It would be appropriate to indicate on your parish documents that they are Honorary Clergy.

3. Protocol For Resolution Of Necessary Diocesan Matters

“As Diocesan matters require the attention of Diocesan leadership, whether involving Diocesan clergy, Diocesan laity, or both clergy and laity; whether arising from perceived conflicts, disputes, reports of alleged misconduct of any kind, or other issues affecting the godly, peaceful governance of the Diocese or any parish (or parishes) thereof; and regardless of how said matters were initially reported, they should be addressed in accordance with the following protocol:

- a. As soon as a matter has been identified as requiring the attention of Diocesan leadership, it should be entrusted to the Regional Archdeacon with oversight of the parish(es) or clergy in question, unless the Regional Archdeacon is the subject of the matter in question or has a conflict of interest, in which case the matter in question should be entrusted to the Suffragan Bishop with oversight of the parish(es) or clergy in question;
- b. An entrusted Suffragan (if one is necessary) may look into the matter himself or assign it to one or two of the Regional Archdeacons in his geographical jurisdiction (other than the disqualified Regional Archdeacon) for preliminary investigation;
- c. The entrusted Regional Archdeacon, entrusted Suffragan, or assigned Regional Archdeacon(s), unless the matter has been referred to the Diocesan Chancellor for formal ecclesiastical disciplinary proceedings, should discuss the proposed response with his (their) immediate Diocesan superior (for an entrusted Regional Archdeacon, his Suffragan; for an entrusted Suffragan, the Diocesan Bishop; and for one or more assigned Regional Archdeacons, the entrusting Suffragan) – the goal, whenever possible, being the successful resolution of the matter in question without involving the Diocesan Bishop during the investigative phase and as the proposed response to same is formulated.

If, at any stage of this protocol, the entrusted Regional Archdeacon, entrusted Suffragan, or assigned Regional Archdeacon(s) believe(s) that formal ecclesiastical disciplinary proceedings are warranted, the Diocesan Chancellor should be consulted without delay. If formal ecclesiastical disciplinary proceedings are commenced, this protocol will no longer apply to the matter in question.

At any stage of this protocol, an entrusted Regional Archdeacon, entrusted Suffragan, or assigned Regional Archdeacon has discretion to consult with one or more members of the Diocesan Council of Advisors or with the Diocesan Bishop, as he (they) deem(s) appropriate. Entrusted Regional Archdeacons, entrusted Suffragans, and assigned Regional Archdeacons should keep accurate written notes of all actions taken pursuant to this protocol.” (See page 37, Diocesan Customary)

Church Planting

We are a missionary Diocese whose focus is on making disciples through preaching, teaching, and church planting. Here are our current church planting initiatives:

1. Restoration Anglican Church, Huntsville, Alabama;
2. St. Benedict Anglican Church, San Antonio, Texas;
3. Anglican Fellowship, Harrisburg, Oregon;
4. New Braunfels Anglican Fellowship, New Braunfels, Texas;
5. Grace Anglican Church, 1601 Van Wickle Drive, Franklin Park, New Jersey; and
6. Emmanuel Anglican Church, Burnaby, Canada.
7. We are involved in church planting in South Africa and the Persian Gulf in supportive oversight roles. We hope this involvement will grow. As we plant churches in foreign countries we will follow Anglican protocol, which is to say, we will work with and under local Anglican Dioceses unless those dioceses or provinces are heretical and hostile to the Gospel of Christ (which saves and sanctifies us to serve God in holiness and righteousness).

Our continuing mission is to evangelize and disciple new believers, and to plant new churches through individual efforts as well as the efforts of Diocesan parishes and Archdeaconries. We established the Archbishop Ademowo Mission Fund (“AAMF”) at the 2019 Synod to help fulfill

this Dominical mission. Please continue to contribute to this fund so we can better accomplish God's divine purposes.

Planting churches is a great start, but sustaining them is what takes so much time, money, and energy. In our Diocese, we don't plant churches by stealing or asking members from other churches to join the new church plant, except when it is the desire of the sending church to help with the planting of the new church. Instead, we focus on the unchurched and on lapsed members. Dr. Martyn Lloyd Jones captured a related sentiment when he wrote, "We preach not to fill our churches, but to save sinners from hell, and the two are not the same."

Our church-planting ministry will experience hostility. When we do, however, we must make sure that such persecution is truly on account of the Gospel. Sometimes the hostility and opposition we experience in ministry have nothing to do with the Gospel of Christ, but are instead caused by our "forgery of God's signature" through unprincipled, ungodly methods of preaching the Gospel, or by pursuing our own private agendas under the cover of ministry. God is not on our side when we engage in ministry that is divisive, discriminatory, or egotistic. The warning of Archbishop Ben Kwashi is very helpful here, "The longest and the most torturous road in life begins with the choice of cutting corners, rejection of honest paths, refusing to humbly learn from godly models, arrogance, and love for dishonesty." If we find ourselves in that unfortunate situation, the way forward is to humble ourselves and return to doing God's work, God's way, with love for others and passion for the glory of God alone!

A Vision for the Future

The mission of our Diocese is to make disciples of all nations and ethnicities for Christ by preaching the Gospel of Christ as we teach the whole counsel of God from His written Word. As we carry out this mission, my over-arching vision is that the Holy Spirit will help us to go deeper in our relationships with God, to draw closer to one another, and to positively impact our communities with both the Gospel of Christ and practical help for those in need.

What steps must we take, and what goals should we set for ourselves in order to achieve this mission and vision? We need to:

- a. Plant 50 churches by the end of 2022.

I am asking every Archdeaconry in the Diocese to begin planning to plant churches through evangelization of sinners, not by stealing members from other churches in the area. So, please begin praying and planning!

- b. Increase giving, both in Diocesan parishes and to the Diocese. To this end, I will establish a Diocesan Projects and Fundraising Committee to help effectuate this goal.
- c. Continue Clergy (and Clergy Wives) Continuing Education during our monthly Clergy meetings and at our annual Clergy Retreat.
- d. Strengthen Diocesan families and our Diocesan Women's Ministry by establishing a central leadership team and organizing both Archdeaconry and Regional events. We have had very good family and Women's workshops and conferences in this past year, but we must do better.
- e. Organize Youth and Young Adult Conferences in our Archdeaconries and Regions. Each Suffragan Bishop will be contacting the Regional Archdeacons in his region to coordinate Diocesan Youth and Young Adult Ministry activities in that region. Diocesan parishes should establish Anglican Youth Fellowship groups and Young Adult Fellowship groups.
- f. Establish quarterly continuing education for Lay Catechists, Lay Readers, and Lay Evangelists. Our Education Department will be working on this.
- g. Make concerted efforts to identify, encourage, and raise up a younger generation of Clergy in North America who possess godly character as well as the aptitude and desire to teach the Word of God, who understand the social context of our time, and who have the ability to perform ministry in that context. I expect all Diocesan parishes to begin the process of identifying and encouraging young candidates for ordained ministry. By the spring of 2021, it is my hope that the names of several such candidates will have been forwarded to me for consideration. The Diocese has an ordination protocol that will now include a weekend for interviews and observation as part of the discernment process.
- h. Continue to observe monthly fasting and prayers every first Wednesday of the month – information concerning focused prayer for each parish will be disseminated from the Diocesan Office.
- i. Establish our Diocesan Office in Houston, Texas, as soon as the construction of our Diocesan Cathedral, Holy Trinity Cathedral in Houston, has been completed – please pray for us, and join us for the celebration at the Cathedral's dedication next year.

- j. Continue to strengthen and enhance the following Diocesan ministries: Administration, Communication, Social Media, and Community Outreach. Community Outreach should emphasize various forms of societal engagement and the provision of material help to the needy in addition to sharing the Gospel of Christ with the community. I have designated All Saints Anglican Church (Houston, Texas) as the Diocesan Center for Social Ministry.

We must endeavor to build our lives, ministries, churches, and communities on godly foundations. I say this because building one's ministry – or life, or community – on a foundation of false teaching, conceit, deception, hatred, selfishness, divisiveness, self-glory, malice, discrimination, or lust for money and power may produce some measure of success in the short-run, but it will neither bring glory to God nor will it prosper in the long-run. Our God before Whom no secrets are hidden is watching us all, and He will reward us according to our works. May God have mercy on the leaders of the Church and help us to lead well for His glory alone!

We must ensure that our Diocese continues its tradition of joyful, united, and intentional outreach to people from all races, tribes, and tongues. As I have said before, The Anglican Diocese of the West is for all who want to be part of what God is doing here in North America in Christ. Our Diocese is not for Nigerians only. That would be social segregation and theological phyletism, an extremely ungodly approach to Christian mission. So, open your church's doors, its leadership and ministries, and, more importantly, open your hearts to people of every race and social standing. Be sensitive, excited, and proactive about it. This is a key strand of the DNA of our Diocese. The Gospel calls us to being one. This is what Dr. John Stott has said in regard to this,

“The good news of the unsearchable riches of Christ which Paul preached is that he died and rose again not only to save sinners like me (though he did), but also to create a single new humanity; not only to redeem us from sin but also to adopt us into God's family; not only to reconcile us to God but also to reconcile us to one another. Thus the church is an integral part of the Gospel. The Gospel is good news of a new society as well as of a new life.”

We are a family irrespective of our various races, tribes, and tongues, and we must keep it that way!

As Biblically-orthodox Christians we need to cultivate self-control, principled behavior, civility, genuine love, godliness, and respect for one another irrespective of race, tribe, and nationality because without these qualities, our mission will be undermined. We must stop dividing God's

Church along racial, socio-economic, age, and tribal lines in the name of mission or doctrinal purity. Racial segregation as a response to racism is both ungodly and Biblically-untenable. One cannot possibly do God's work effectively with anger, hatred, deceit, strife, discrimination, injustice, narcissism, and bitterness in one's heart. All such ministry will be totally consumed by fire on the day of judgment. Its only legacy will be one of crisis rather than a legacy of peace and growth in Christ. Make sure that your ministry is all about Christ, and not about yourself. The words of John Newton are of great importance in this regard:

“They who make the office of a preacher an occasion whereby to promote their own interest or reputation, may, perhaps, obtain the reward they seek; but it is such a reward as can only satisfy a weak and mercenary mind. And from Him, whose name they prostitute, they can only expect the reward assigned to hypocrites and unbelievers.”

Our Father's intention is that through Christ the church will become a truly multi-cultural, multi-racial, multi-ethnic, and multi-lingual community of faithful men and women whose goal is to bless others through preaching and living the Gospel of Christ, and whose ultimate purpose is to glorify God in this world and in the world to come, in Christ. That's His plan, so let's follow it!

GAFCON Provinces / ACNA / CANA

We are committed to GAFCON – **G**lobal **A**nglican **F**ellowship **C**onference – a fellowship of conservative Anglican Churches. As a Diocese in the Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion), we must uphold our distinctive Biblical and theological commitments in matters of doctrine, liturgy, and mission. At the same time, however, we must love our brothers and sisters in the Anglican Church in North America (“ACNA”). We will make every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace by living in harmony with the ACNA, respecting their Provincial integrity in North America in full accordance with Anglican ethos.

To this end, the virtues of godliness and principled behavior require that the Church of Nigeria not create new dioceses in North America. We must always consider how our actions affect others, and how they affect our integrity as a Province. I have respectfully counseled the Church of Nigeria not to create new dioceses in North America because the ACNA is our GAFCON partner and because the Church of Nigeria has declared itself to be in full communion with the ACNA. Creating new dioceses would be a violation of Anglican tradition and a breach of the brotherly love relationship expected of conservative Anglicans in the Anglican Communion (and especially within GAFCON). We can fulfill our duty of outreach in North America (to Nigerians

and non-Nigerians alike) without creating more dioceses. More dioceses will not, *ipso facto*, help reach sinners for Christ. As I have stated previously on several occasions, the utilization of our Suffragan Bishops as Area Bishops for distinct geographical regions of the United States of America and Canada is both sufficient and effective for the success of our mission and does not run afoul of the traditions of the Anglican Communion.

Creating more dioceses will only foment ecclesiastical dissension, tarnish the image and reputation of the Church of Nigeria, and undermine its credibility in GAFCON and the worldwide Anglican Communion. Stirring up strife amongst Anglicans in North America is not God's way of seeing His mission fulfilled. Many besides me have similarly counseled against such a course of action, including, among others, the recent Primatial Committees on CANA Mission, both Suffragan Bishops of our Diocese, the former Chancellor of CANA (our Diocesan Chancellor), the former Chancellor of the Anglican Diocese of the Trinity, the General Secretary of GAFCON, and the Primate of the ACNA and Chairman of GAFCON (Archbishop Foley Beach).

As the Church of Nigeria's former Missionary Bishop and now Coordinating Bishop of the Church of Nigeria North American Mission (CONNAM), as well as the Diocesan Bishop of The Anglican Diocese of the West, I caution that the creation of new dioceses will adversely impact the relationships of CONNAM and the Church of Nigeria with our GAFCON partner, the ACNA. This is a matter of serious concern to me. Past decisions and actions have led to lingering problems, including confusion, broken relationships within the former CANA Dioceses (CANA East, CANA West, and the Anglican Diocese of the Trinity), and broken relationships between the Church of Nigeria and the ACNA. I strongly urge the Church of Nigeria to avoid making any decisions or taking any action that will violate Anglican tradition and the bond of affection within GAFCON. I'm grateful to our Primate, Archbishop Henry Ndukuba, and to Archbishop Foley Beach, the Primate of ACNA, for reaching out to each other to bridge this gap and rebuild relationships as we carry out the CONNAM mission. By the grace of God, I also aspire to this the goal. This in no way means that we will surrender our freedom in the Gospel or our theological, liturgical, and mission distinctives as a CONNAM Diocese of the Church of Nigeria, but means that we will conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of the Gospel, with respect and love towards our brothers and sisters in the Christian faith.

I must also note that our mission in North America belongs to God. My intent is to leave a legacy marked by unity in and passion for the work of the Gospel for the glory of God. I pray that none of us – Bishops, Clergy, Laity, parishes, and Dioceses of CONNAM – will leave legacies of crisis resulting from the pursuit of divisive agendas in the name of mission.

The Former Ecclesiastical Mission of CANA Is Now CONNAM

I wish to advise you again that by directive of the Primate of the Church of Nigeria, and by resolution of the Board of Trustees of CANA to dissolve the Texas non-profit corporate entity known as CANA (without eliminating its ecclesiastical mission), CANA (the corporation) has now been dissolved. Its legal existence terminated on October 6, 2020, and, as of that date, its bylaws ceased having legal force and effect.

Please also be advised that the existence of all CANA offices, including (without limitation) CANA Missionary Bishop, Chancellor of CANA, Treasurer of CANA, Chairman of CANA Board of Trustees, CANA Trustees (Board Members), and ex officio CANA Trustees (Board Members), also ceased to exist on October 6, 2020. The individuals who served in those CANA offices, as a matter of law, may no longer utilize their former titles or act in their former capacities, and no longer possess any CANA-related authority. The Diocese of the West continues to be a Diocese of the Church of Nigeria along with its Diocesan Bishop, Suffragan Bishops, Clergy, and laity.

It has been a pleasure serving the Church of Nigeria in the capacity of CANA Missionary Bishop since May 2019. That position ceased to exist the when the Certificate of Termination I signed was sent to the Texas Secretary of State and was accepted for filing on October 6, 2020. The Primate of the Church of Nigeria recently announced the new name for the ecclesiastical mission of the Church of Nigeria here in North America: **Church of Nigeria North American Mission (CONNAM)**. In addition, on October 16, 2020, the Primate appointed me to be the Coordinating Bishop for CONNAM. I have formally accepted this appointment. I have also asked Barrister Muyiwa Sobo, the former Chancellor of the Anglican Diocese of the Trinity (“ADOTT”), to serve as my personal counsel for this appointed position. Please pray for him and me, and for all the Bishops, Clergy, and laity of CONNAM to work together amicably for the progress of the mission and kingdom of God and his Christ here in North America.

Excerpts from the Primate of the Church of Nigeria Address at the 2020 General Synod of the Church of Nigeria

CANA AND UK/EUROPE MISSIONS –

“The re-envisioning of our International Mission engagement, as in CANA and our Chaplaincy in UK and Europe, will be done. In recent times the uneasy relationship between CANA and ACNA resulted in a letter from Archbishop

Foley Beach, giving us concerns for our Mission and ministry partnership in USA and Canada. Our response team has been at work, and we are thankful to Bishops Stephen Fagbemi, Israel Okoye, James Odedeji and Felix Orji. The matter has been resolved, Archbishop Beach has withdrawn his letter, and we have agreed to meet to discuss our partnership in the overall good of the Church of God, the Church of Nigeria's Mission in North America, and the GAFCON family.

“We are very grateful for the leadership of our Missionary Bishop for CANA, the Rt. Rev. Dr. Felix Orji, whose prompt actions in this matter have helped us greatly. We are concluding the process of winding down CANA as a registered corporation. CANA will continue her work as a Mission Agency of the Church of Nigeria with the Name _____.”

GAFCON –

“The 2020 GAFCON Conference slated for June 2020 could not be held due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the GAFCON Primates Council meeting was held virtually through Zoom. God is at work in the different regions of the GAFCON world. We commend the work of Archbishop Benjamin Kwashi, the General Secretary of GAFCON, and his team. During the meeting, Rt. Rev. Prof. Asaju was confirmed as the Bishop in charge of the GAFCON Bishops Training Institute. His versatility will ensure the training for the new Bishops in the GAFCON family. The Church of Nigeria proposed that GAFCON adopt 2020-2030 as a “Decade of Discipleship.” This proposal was adopted, and we await the programs and strategy for its implementation from GAFCON Secretary Archbishop Ben Kwashi and his team. Like the Decade of Evangelism, this will focus the Church's attention on deepening the faith and commitment of the believers in Christ, thereby fulfilling the purpose and calling of the Church. A virtual GAFCON Primates meeting has been proposed for this year, and the possibility of an in-person GAFCON Conference in Rwanda in 2021 is being studied.”

CREATION OF DIOCESES –

“Archbishop Nicholas Okoh placed a moratorium on the creation of Dioceses in order to consolidate the existing Dioceses, and especially the needier ones. Although earlier this year a Committee under Archbishop Israel Amao submitted a report concerning the creation of new Dioceses, we are new in office, and the

need to study the situation carefully as we consolidate and sustain the enormous work started by my predecessors is of utmost importance. Therefore, we have placed a moratorium on the creation of new Dioceses, whether full-fledged or missionary. This will be reviewed again at the next General Synod.”

Politics in America

Our nation is experiencing so much turmoil and division over all kinds of issues. This state of affairs is not only caused by political and theological liberals, but also by conservative Christians who exacerbate the problem by inconsistencies in their Biblical thinking and behavior, and especially as their behavior concerns the moral and political issues of our society. Our present strife will likely worsen as election day nears, so please permit me to use this opportunity to remind you of several things.

First, our commitment to Christ and his Word must take precedence over our commitment to a political party or to any social ideology. I expect our Diocesan Clergy to take a leadership role in this regard in their private lives as well as on social media. We must never forget that we are born again not only into the family of God, but also into the Kingdom of God where Jesus is our Lord and King. We live under a divine monarchy. In the kingdom of God, it is not the will of the people or the will of the individual or the will of your political party that governs, but the will of God our Sovereign Lord and King. His will should be our ultimate concern. His Word is law. It is important for us to remember these things. God is sovereign, which means that we are not His peers (or equals). Rather, we are His creatures, and citizens of His kingdom through faith in Christ and hence required to submit to Him as our Lord and King. In his book “The Evangelical Pulpit” John Seel writes,

“A politicized faith not only blurs our priorities, but weakens our loyalties. Our primary citizenship is not on earth but in heaven ... Though few evangelicals would deny this truth in theory, the language of our spiritual citizenship frequently gets wrapped in the red, white and blue. Rather than acting as resident aliens of a heavenly kingdom, too often we sound [and act] like resident apologists for a Christian America ... Unless we reject the false reliance on the illusion of Christian America, evangelicalism will continue to distort the Gospel and thwart a genuine Biblical identity ... American evangelicalism is now covered by layers and layers of historically-shaped attitudes that obscure our original Biblical core.”

Instead of trusting in our ability to engineer our fate, we need to trust the Lord to help us in these times of need and trouble. He will help us in accordance with His sovereign will and providence.

Second, as we approach this 2020 Presidential election, we need to pray to God to give us the best possible political leader for the United States. What does a good leader look like? A good political leader will care about the poor, the marginalized, the victimized, all lives (born and unborn), the stranger, and racial justice and equity. This leader will be committed to intellectual honesty, and to Biblical teaching on marriage and sexual morality as well as to religious freedom and national security. A good political leader will do his or her best to unite America under God, recognizing the sovereign supremacy and authority of Jesus over every person, principle, and thing.

We need to pray (for ourselves) to become people committed to Christ and to His righteousness in our thinking and our doing. We need to be people who are balanced. Dennis Prager was right when he complained that “Many times on the far right, we abandon compassion in the name of standards, and many times on the far left, we abandon standards in the name of compassion. There is no reason on earth not to have both.” We must be careful not to think that we can turn America into a divine monarchy or political theocracy through our activism. That approach is closer to the defunct false teaching of the 20th century Social Gospel movement of Walter Rauschenbusch, who denied penal substitutionary atonement and insisted that Christianity is not about getting individuals to heaven but about transforming life on earth into the harmony of heaven by following the example of Jesus – a totally immanent ethical religion with focus on being a better society on earth with the temporal well-being of man at the center, not God.

As believers, I ask you to heed the warning of Dr. John MacArthur, who eloquently states,

“We must repudiate our confused loyalties and concerns for the passing world and put aside our misguided efforts to change culture externally. To allow our thoughts, plans, time, money, and energy to be spent trying to make a superficially Christian America, or to put a veneer of morality over the world, is to distort the Gospel, misconstrue our divine calling, and squander our God-given resources. We must not weaken our spiritual mission, obscure our priority of proclaiming the Gospel of salvation, or become confused about our spiritual citizenship, loyalties, and obligations. We are to change society by faithfully proclaiming the Gospel, which changes lives on the inside.”

Dr. MacArthur continues,

“Today’s evangelical political activists seem to be unaware of how much their methodology parallels that of liberal Christians at the start of the twentieth century. Like those misguided idealists, contemporary evangelicals have become enamored with temporal issues at the expense of eternal values. Evangelical activists in essence are simply preaching a politically conservative version of the old social gospel, emphasizing social and cultural concerns above spiritual ones. That kind of thinking fosters the view that government is either our ally (if it supports our special agenda) or our enemy (if it remains opposed or unresponsive to our voice). The political strategy becomes the focus of everything, as if the spiritual fortunes of God’s people rise or fall depending on who is in office. But the truth is that no human government can ultimately do anything either to advance or to thwart God’s kingdom. And the worst, most despotic worldly government in the end cannot halt the power of the Holy Spirit or the spread of God’s Word.”

How should we relate to one another in times of political tension? In regard to how we relate to one another in times such as this or even afterwards, Scott Sauls has great counsel for us:

“As Christena Cleveland has said, the best way to understand what our blind spots are is to get into personal relationship with other Christians who have divergent political views. The truth is, it is not possible to be a wholesale follower of the Bible and Jesus and be a wholesale follower of any political party. God created government, but people created politics, and people are sinful so our political systems will also contain elements of sin and blindness in them. As such, wholesale followers of Jesus will carry with them a ‘both/and’ and a ‘neither/nor’ posture concerning political parties and platforms. Unless a human system is fully and consistently centered on God (no human system is), Jesus will have things to affirm and things to critique about the system. The American political left and the political right are no exception. This does not mean that Christians cannot align themselves with a political party. But if we do align with a political party, we must hold our loyalty to that party loosely in comparison to the way we hold onto the Kingdom of Jesus, or, rather, to the way Jesus’s Kingdom holds onto us.”

Camille Paglia warns,

“Those who invest all of their spiritual energies in politics will reap the whirlwind. The evidence is all around us—the paroxysms of inchoate, infantile rage suffered by

those who have turned fallible politicians into saviors and devils, godlike avatars of Good vs Evil.”

In practical terms, our vocation as Christians is not about making America great by thinking or acting as if your favorite political party and varying versions of civilization will save America or make America great. Rather the future of America, Canada, the Persian Gulf, and our various countries represented at this Synod depends on God’s sovereign purpose and Christians living out the Gospel of grace in our daily conduct and character as we call all Americans and Canadians to turn from their sin to Christ, and to submit to Him as Savior and Lord. We must represent Christ and speak the divine Word to powers and principalities in Government instead of being sycophants and political fanatics who have compromised their integrity. We must call our nations and political leaders to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness rather than preaching and fighting for our political parties. We must also be clear on moral issues from a Biblical point of view, not from the point of view of any political party. Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen rightly said, “The refusal to take sides on great moral issues is itself a decision. It is a silent acquiescence to evil. The tragedy of our time is that those who still believe in honesty lack fire and conviction, while those who believe in dishonesty are full of passionate conviction.” Having “fire” does not mean being arrogant and abusive of those who disagree, but being passionate about truth with gentleness, respect, and clarity of expression. We must put our faith in God rather than in any political party.

So, as we approach this election, let me share with you the counsel John Wesley gave to British Anglicans and Methodists during a heated political campaign in 1774. John Wesley wrote the following in his Journal:

“I met those of our society who had votes in the ensuing election, and advised them:

1. To vote ... for the person they judged most worthy,
2. To speak no evil of the person they voted against, and
3. To take care their spirits were not sharpened against those that voted on the other side.”

So, go out there love one another, vote in accordance with Scripture and Christian ethical principles, and leave the rest to God! No one will become the President of this country without God’s permission. Of that I can assure you! So, trust God – do what is right and be good and honorable citizens who respect the government in power, even when you have to disagree with it on matters that conflict with Biblical truth and godly conscience. And whatever you do, I

implore you not to fan the flames of hate and violence because we are called to peace as we follow the Prince of Peace.

Race and Violence in America

In addition to COVID-19, America is experiencing another pandemic – a pandemic of racism, reverse racism, discrimination, injustice, violence, segregation, and division in both the church and the nation. Let me be clear: **RACISM EXISTS! RACISM IS REAL!** Whatever you do, do not deny its existence. I have experienced racism and you probably have, too – blacks, whites, Asians, and Native Americans have all experienced racism – some more, and some less. What is God telling us to about it? How can we overcome racism and tribalism against Native Americans, blacks, whites, Asians, Hispanics, and Middle Easterners in our nations and in our churches? The answer is not as difficult as many suppose because the Scriptures give us God's divine guidance if we will only humble ourselves and follow that guidance with confidence that He will help us.

1. Believe in Jesus Christ as your Savior and surrender to Him as the Lord of your life.
2. Love your neighbor as you love yourself.
3. Be on the alert for the racial pandemic, and when you see it, name it and resist it – do not excuse evil.
4. If you sense or experience even a hint of racism, discrimination, or prejudice in your heart toward anyone of group of people, admit it and repent of it.
5. Always pursue justice and peace over anger and division both in the church and in society.
6. Those in authority should respect those they are to serve and protect, and those who are protected should be respectful and cooperate with those in authority – we must repudiate both police brutality and hostility towards the police, and under no conditions should we defund the police.
7. Pray to God for help.
8. Befriend someone of a different race and commit yourselves to really getting to know each other as being precious to God.
9. Realize that not everyone of a different racial group is racist, and that different races may also yearn for peace, justice, and friendship.

10. Forgive people who offend you; do not retaliate; and apologize to those toward whom you have harbored racist feelings.
11. Be extremely careful about the sources of your information on race issues – it is your duty to correctly understand the information you receive, and to use it wisely so as to avoid making claims and/or stating conclusions that are untrue.
12. Do not pass on information that is not true, because it only escalates racial tension and disunity.

Fighting racism and discrimination with reverse racism, violence, segregation, and/or division is not only hypocritical, but counter-productive and ungodly. There is a hallowed place for peaceful protest against evil, but we must condemn and reject violent protest and wanton destruction of property and lives. Attacking and killing law enforcement officers is a violation of Biblical teaching and severely undermines the well-being of society. As my Canon to the Ordinary, Venerable Don Armstrong, put it,

“Racial injustice is real, but violence only diminishes the standing of protesters as citizens as they go on creating more injustice and discrimination by their violence. When people turn to blocking the streets and burning down their neighborhoods, they undo all the good support they otherwise would have had, and go from problem solving to making a whole new set of problems ... and their support evaporates and turns to disgust.”

We must return to the divine solution which is to love God and our neighbors as we pursue holiness, righteousness, and justice for all.

Society of Saint Benedict **The Anglican Diocese of the West (CONNAM)**

The Society of Saint Benedict shall function as a ministry of The Anglican Diocese of the West (Church of Nigeria) for the purpose of formation in community guided by the study of Holy Scripture and the Rule of St. Benedict (the “Rule”). Its objective is for all members of the society to deepen their walk with Christ and to live lives of obedience, humility, prayer, and charity as expressed in the works of mercy and obedience to the Great Commission (evangelism and mission – Matthew 28:18-20). Essentially, this Society is for men and women (lay and clergy) who wish to encourage and hold each other accountable as they live Christian lives under the Gospel of grace in Christ.

1. This Society will operate under the episcopal oversight of the Diocesan Bishop of the Anglican Diocese of the West (CONNAM), with individual membership of laity and clergy who are members in good standing of a parish within the Diocese. The rules of this Society are subject to revision by the Diocesan Bishop.
2. This Society will be led by a Minister General appointed by the Diocesan Bishop for a term of 5 years (and renewable, as needed). Members are expected to follow the directions of the Diocesan Bishop and the Minister General. Failure to do so will lead to removal from the Society. It is my pleasure to appoint Rev'd Barry Kowald, Rector of St Benedict Anglican Church in San Antonio, Texas, as the Minister General of the Society of St. Benedict, effective today (October 23, 2020).
3. Members of the Society shall be subject to the Canons and Constitution of the Diocese, the Diocesan Customary, and the ecclesiastical discipline of The Anglican Diocese of the West.
4. As a Society, the focus will remain on establishing small group-based communities throughout the Diocese that meet regularly for prayer, discipleship (using the Rule), and studying related Scriptural concepts, both exegetically and devotionally *in lectio*, with the intention of strengthening the members' interior lives as "doers of the word, and not hearers only" (James 1:22).
4. The Society will gather for virtual compline each month using the liturgy of a Book of Common Prayer approved by the Diocesan Bishop.
5. The expectations of each member of the Society are as follows:
 - a. Confirmed Anglican and received as a member in good standing of a Diocesan parish, with regular church attendance in the Diocese and with his or her Rector's consent.
 - b. Live a godly, moral life in charity toward one's brothers and sisters according to the Scriptures, and "be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger" (James 1:19).
 - c. Pray the offices daily (at the minimum, Morning and Evening Prayer).
 - d. Study the Scriptures and thereby "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18).

- e. Aspire to grow into a deeper, more stable interior life in the power of the Holy Spirit, and welcome the stranger into a stable discipleship community.
6. The following texts are recommended for prayer and study:
 - a. The Scriptures of the Old and New Testament.
 - b. The Benedictine Handbook, published by Liturgical Press.
 - c. Preferring Christ – A devotional commentary to the Rule of St. Benedict, by Norvene Vest.
 - d. Any version of the Book of Common Prayer Book approved by the Diocesan Constitution and Canons.

Clergy Welfare

As the Bishop of this Diocese, it is necessary to remind everyone that the welfare of Clergy is important to me and should be important to you as parishes and parish Vestries. Therefore, I ask ALL PARISH VESTRIES to review your Clergy salaries and benefits, including pensions, life insurance, and medical insurance, endeavoring to be generous and acknowledging that your Clergy have families to care for just as you do. Our Lord Jesus said, “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy” (Matthew 5:7). Stinginess towards your Clergy is in no way a virtue. Your Clergy’s children observe how you treat their parents. Sometimes, because they have no voice, they express their views by leaving our Anglican churches the moment they have an opportunity to do so. Do not be stumbling blocks to the spiritual well-being of the children of our Diocesan Clergy through acts of hypocrisy and ungodly behavior – rather be blessings to your Clergy and to their families, and The Lord will bless you!

Youth / Young Adults Essay Competition

Youth and Young Adult ministry is important to us and I’m pleased to report that good ministry to young people is happening all around the Diocese. We plan to have a Diocesan Youth and Young Adults conference by Zoom by February next year (or perhaps even before Christmas). I have asked Venerable Dr. Barnabas Emenogu and his Canadian team to plan this first-ever Diocesan event.

I am delighted to advise you that the 2020 maiden edition of the Diocese of the West Youth Essay Competition has successfully concluded. Mama West and I are grateful to Sir Dr. Izu

Nwachukwu for leading this project with the guidance and support of Venerable Dr. Barnabas Emenogu.

Dr. Nwachukwu wrote,

“I am happy to report that there was appreciable enthusiasm from our youth in participating, although the Covid-19 pandemic may likely have impacted on overall participation levels. More importantly, I am pleased to report that the quality of essay entries was quite impressive and clearly demonstrates that our youth are well-engaged and well-informed in both their personal and spiritual lives. There was also a shared observation by the entire panel of assessors that this competition has great potential to foster the spiritual growth of our youth and grow their participation in the diocese, and so, therefore, should be continued as a standing commitment of the diocese.”

We hope that many more of our Youth will participate next year in a timely fashion. Mama West and I congratulate the students who took this competition seriously and made us proud with their work. Here are the results of the Diocesan 2020 Youth Essay Competition:

College/University Category

Winner: Chidera Junifer Chinaka – The Good Shepherd (Austin, Texas)

Certificates of Meritorious Participation/Honorable Mention: Ekene Onyeka – Our Saviour (Calgary, Alberta), Chidozie Obioma Alozie – All Saints (New York, New York), and Chisomu Okeke – The Good Shepherd (Austin, Texas)

High School Category

Co-Winners (tying entries): Chisom Elo Ochuba – All Saints (Greater Toronto Area, Ontario) and Chibunkem Onyinanya – St. Faith (Riverdale, Georgia)

Certificates of Meritorious Participation/Honorable Mention: Possible Chinaka – The Good Shepherd (Austin, Texas) and Chukwuagoziem Onyinanya – St. Faith (Riverdale, Georgia)

The top winners will receive a Certificate of Excellence and a Diocesan medal while those in the second positions will receive a Certificate of Meritorious Participation. Once again, congratulations and thanks to all of you for participating! God bless you!

Conclusion

In conclusion, I ask you to strive to be people of prayer and godliness. Make preaching, teaching, hearing, believing, obeying, and applying the Word of God central to your personal lives, to your parish lives, and to our Diocesan life. There is no hope – and no transformation – apart from the living and powerful Word of the living God. God has called us to the mission of making disciples for Christ. We cannot possibly fulfill that mission without knowing and preaching His Word and living lives that adorn the Gospel of Christ (Titus 2:10). Richard Hooker reminds us of this truth:

“The end of the Word of God is to save, and therefore we term it the word of life. The way for all men and women to be saved is by the knowledge of that truth which the word hath taught. To this end the word of God no otherwise serveth than only in the nature of a doctrinal instrument. It saveth because it maketh ‘wise to salvation’.”

We need revival, and power, and reformation in the church of God and in this Diocese. How will that come about? We need to pray and preach the Word of God faithfully. Dr Robert Godfrey tells us:

“The only way to reform the church is to keep studying the Word of God, to keep coming back to the Word of God, to keep looking at the Word of God, and then trying to live out the Word of God.”

May God grant us power to preach the Gospel with passion and compassion, and to plant churches that are disciples of grace. And may God enable us to live for His glory!

May the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit be upon you and remain with you now and forever. *Amen.*