



The Bishop's Pastoral Address to The Anglican Diocese of the West  
(USA and Canada)

# **NURTURING THE FAMILY SPIRITUALLY FOR MISSION**

*By*

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(USA and Canada)**

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“You don’t choose your family. They are God’s gift to you, as you are to them.”  
– Archbishop Desmond Tutu

“The family is the first essential cell of human society.”  
– Pope John XXIII

“Apart from the cross, there is no other ladder by which we may get to heaven.”  
– St. Rose of Lima

“Give something, however small, to the one in need. For it is not small to one who has nothing. Neither is it small to God, if we have given what we could.”  
– St. Gregory Nazianzen

“The ultimate goal of fasting is to help each one of us to make a complete gift of self to God.”  
– Pope Benedict XVI.

“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 it be a settled principle in our minds that the first and chief business of the Church of Christ is to preach the Gospel. The words of Paul ought to be constantly remembered – ‘Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel’ (1 Cor. 1:17). When the Gospel of Christ is faithfully and fully preached, we need not fear that the sacraments will be undervalued. Baptism and the Lord’s Supper will always be most truly revered in those churches where the truth of Jesus is most fully taught and known.”  
– Bishop J.C. Ryle

“Anyone who is in a position of spiritual leadership who fails to teach the more demanding, less comfortable, ‘narrow gate’ and ‘rough road’ side of discipleship is a false prophet.”  
– Dr. J.I. Packer

*Let us pray.*

ALMIGHTY and everlasting God, who, by the Holy Spirit presided in the Council of the blessed Apostles and has promised through your Son Jesus Christ to be with your Church until the end of the world, we beseech you to be with the Council of your Church assembled here in your Name and Presence. Save us from all error, ignorance, pride, and prejudice, and of your great mercy vouchsafe, we beseech You, so to direct, sanctify, and govern us in our work by the mighty power of the Holy Spirit so that the comforting Gospel of Christ may be truly preached, truly received, and truly followed in all places to the breaking down of the kingdom of sin, Satan, and death, until all of Your dispersed sheep, being gathered into one fold, shall become partakers of everlasting life through the merits and death of Your Son and our Savior, Jesus Christ, our Lord. *Amen.*

### **A Warm Welcome!**

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. *Amen.*

I am delighted to welcome all the Clergy and Laity of the Diocese and our esteemed guests to this 9<sup>th</sup> Synod of The Anglican Diocese of the West. Thank you for your sacrifice and faithfulness. Your prayers and support have been instrumental in the hand of God for the good and work of our Diocese.

It is my pleasure to welcome our guest speaker, the Most Rev'd Dr. Benjamin Argak Kwashi, the Bishop of the Anglican Diocese of Jos, the General Secretary of GAFCON and the former Archbishop of the Ecclesiastical Province of Jos in the Church of Nigeria. He and his wife, Mama Gloria, live in Jos, Plateau State, in Northern Nigeria. They have six children. They also have adopted many orphans who live with them at the Bishop's Court in Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria. Archbishop Kwashi, we look forward to hearing you speak to us tomorrow concerning "Jesus: The Living One"!

I must first give all thanks to God our Father for His eternal love for us, and to our Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord has, indeed, been gracious to us. He has blessed us with "every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus." It is only by His grace and mercy that we are Christians, and that we are able to gather together for this 9th Annual Synod of The Anglican Diocese of the West. To Him be the glory forever! *Amen.*

I am sincerely grateful to The Most Rev'd Henry Ndukuba, Archbishop, Metropolitan, and Primate of the Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion), and to his wife, Mama Angela Ndukuba, for their support, prayers, and encouragement. I am grateful to everyone who has made this Synod a success. I commend my Diocesan Staff and Officers and especially our Executive Archdeacon, The Ven. Dr. Myles Calvin; Chancellor, Mr. Christopher Milner; Diocesan Treasurer Sir Charles Napier; and Suffragan Bishops, Bishop Scott Seely and Bishop Celestine Ironna, for their selfless and sacrificial service to the Diocese for many years. Special thanks go to my family for their loving support and patience with me. I also want to express appreciation to the Knights (see Appendix C for their names) and to all the Diocesan parishes that have been consistent in their financial support for the Diocese. You are indeed true partners in the Gospel (Philippians 1:3-11). Mama West and I are exceedingly grateful to the Diocese for its outpouring of love when my mother-in-law died in January of this year. Thank you so much for your condolences and gifts.

I also want to commend the following people for their extraordinary service to the Diocese: Sir Innocent & Lady Onyinye Ohalete for donating the Bishop's Throne and the Bishop's Chair for the use of the Diocesan Bishop at our new Cathedral in Houston; Sir Henry Eke for serving faithfully as the Communications Officer for the Knights of the Diocese; Dr. Oluchi Ohanaka for ensuring that my family and I and several other members of our Houston community were vaccinated against COVID-19 very soon after the release of the vaccine, enabling me to continue the work of the Diocese without undue hindrance; Lady Dr. Obiageli Obijiofor for her tireless work as our Diocesan Medical Director; Dr. Winifred Oge Dike for providing free dental care for the Bishop and Diocesan Clergy in Houston; and all medical professionals in the various countries of this Diocese for their sacrificial service to others during the COVID-19 pandemic. Special thanks also to Mr. Uzo & Eunice Okafor, Sir Solomon & Chinwe Kanu, Sir Paul & Monica Chukwujekwu, Sir Forster & Agatha Duru, Sir Emma & Clara Abugu, Sir Ron & Marilyn Munden, Sir Bill & Chana Burton, Sir Sonny & Ann Brown, Sir Randall & Elvia Crossland, Lady Sharon Butterworth, Sir Chike & Ona Nwosu, Sir Okey & Lady Winifred Dike, Sir Charles & Joy Onuogu, Sir Chidi & Lady Mbanefo, Sir Ralph & Obiageli Obijiofor, Ven. Chukwuma Obadinobi, Ven. Isaac Rehberg, Canon Dr. Rob Goodman, Mr. Frank Akor, and Mr. Oladimeji Adelaja for their significant assistance to the work of my episcopacy. We pray that the Lord will bless all of you as you have blessed the community of this Diocese!

We welcome the following new clergy into our Diocese:

Rev'd John Ryan Mack

Rev'd Ogadi Ucheagwa  
Rev'd Ifeanyi Azubike  
Rev'd Israel Olaleru  
Rev'd Samson Chibuzo Nwanekwu  
Rev'd Gideon Uzochukwu Ibeh  
Rev'd Clifford Erondu  
Venerable Dr. Emmanuel Nduka  
Venerable Uzodinma Amutaigwe

As we welcome you into the Diocese, we pledge our prayers and love for you. I take this opportunity to remind you that all Diocesan Clergy have been set apart by God to call sinners to repent of their sin, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior, and follow Him obediently. We have a sacred responsibility to preach the Word of God faithfully, pointing people to Christ as Savior and Lord, and leading disciples to worship God in Spirit and truth instead of worshiping the idols of selfishness, materialism, secularism, egotism, and sexual freedom. It is neither Christian ministry nor mission nor pastoral care to tell a person struggling with sin that they do not have to resist temptation simply because they feel a natural compulsion to one particular sin or another. As R.C. Sproul rightly noted, “No one can enter the kingdom of God without repentance, without fleeing from sin and putting his trust in Christ alone.” We must lovingly, prayerfully, and firmly teach and encourage one another to resist Satan and to live a holy life before God. *That* is Christian ministry and mission and godly pastoral care. The Primate of the Church of Nigeria, Archbishop Henry Ndukuba, recently noted,

“The church in our generation is, therefore, marked with profession without character, the claim of becoming Christians without the character of Jesus, without becoming like Him, without a changed and transformed life. Change and transformation come by the pruning, teaching, and leading of the Holy Spirit and God’s Word. This can only happen within the context of discipleship. Besides, how many of our people are really mentored, even among us leaders? Someone has said that Christianity in Africa has grown one mile long and one inch deep. The burden and mission is for the Church to rise up to the core ministries to which God has called us, that is, to the Great Commission, commitment to the Word of God, preaching this Gospel, teaching this Word, and living by it in such a way that each member becomes an instrument in the hands of God in bringing people unto the Lord.”

As an evangelical Christo-centric Anglican diocese whose ministry is to preach the Gospel, we must endeavor to live lives that are worthy of the Gospel we preach. A life worthy of the Gospel is marked by truthfulness, love for one another, respect for godly authority, peaceableness, holiness, and righteousness. Both our preaching and lifestyle must be congruent with Biblical faith – otherwise, our mission will be lacking in integrity and efficacy. Dr. Michael Green was correct when he noted, “One thing is certain: unless people are impressed by the Christian lives they see, they are not going to want to go further and examine the truth of the Christian message we proclaim.”

The Christian Life should not be marked by lies and hate, but by truthfulness, love, and the exaltation of Jesus as Savior and Lord in our lives and in the world. Satan is at work wherever we see hatred, false accusations, and self-exaltation. Paul reminds Christians to give up bitterness and wrath, as they are not qualities of the Christian life, but of a self-centered life. He writes, “Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you” (Ephesians 4:31-32). In the same vein, John states unequivocally that “Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness. Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling. But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes” (1 John 2:9-11). We must endeavor to be gracious, humble, and godly. In 1943, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the great German pastor and theologian, was asked how it was possible for the Church to sit back and let Hitler seize absolute power. Here was his response: “It was the teaching of cheap grace.” According to Bonhoeffer, “Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, communion without confession, absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ.”

When Christians forget that their primary allegiance is to the Lord Jesus Christ, they lose their focus and commitment and begin to serve false gods – the gods of pleasure, political partisanship, moral relativism, and self-centeredness. Unfortunately, we tend to justify such behavior with “righteous” rationalization. We must pause, reflect, and return to a life of repentance and singular obedience to Christ alone, ensuring that He is the center of our spiritual and moral lives.

As Dr. David Wells rightly noted, “An evangelical faith that is not passionate about truth and righteousness is a faith which is a lost cause. All that it will then be living for is simply

its own organization.” Let us examine ourselves to see whether we are truly in the faith – or deceiving ourselves.

Since our last Synod, by the mercies of God, we have had a successful series of clergy professional education sessions. As a result, we are much more united and focused than before. I’m thankful for our Diocesan Clergy and the good work they do. I’m grateful to Venerable Dr. Barnabas Emenogu for his Diocesan role as Chaplain of Young Adults, and for their well-attended first conference, which will become an annual event. We are also in the process of developing and hosting similar conferences for the Youth, Diocesan Women, and Knights of the Diocese.

### **Church of Nigeria North American Mission (“CONNAM”) –**

The Church of Nigeria North American Mission (“CONNAM”) is comprised of The Anglican Diocese of the West (Bishop Orji, Diocesan), Anglican Chaplains (Bishop Derek Jones, Diocesan), and Anglican Diocese of the Trinity (“ADOTT”). My life as Diocesan Bishop of The Anglican Diocese of the West has been extremely busy since 2019. I have been tasked with leading the mission of the Church of Nigeria here in North America: first as CANA Missionary Bishop (in May 2019), then as CONNAM Coordinating Bishop (in October 2020), and now as Supervisory Bishop of ADOTT (since March 2021). We are grateful to God for the ministry of Bishop Amos Fagbamiye, the recently retired Diocesan Bishop of ADOTT, and we pray that God will bless him and his wife, Mama Abike, in their retirement.

The Lord has been gracious to enable me to do the work described above despite enormous challenges. I am committed to following Christ in obedience and faith as a leader, and to being a father and brother in Christ to all despite all the challenges and troubles. I believe that by God’s grace and your support we will succeed in this mission. The mission of CONNAM is to reach people with the Gospel of Christ to save them from God’s eternal wrath, teaching and training them to become faithful disciples of Christ who worship God in Spirit and truth, living in obedience to God’s written Word. We are missionaries in North America, so focus your energy on the preaching and propagation of the Gospel. That is our mission. We must eschew indiscipline and ungodliness to accomplish this objective. We must seek God’s glory above our personal or group glory. Our focus must be on God and the glorious Gospel of His Son, Jesus Christ. If your focus is not on Christ and the mission of His Gospel, it will definitely be on you yourself, and on your own personal mission. This results in becoming prickly and feeling hurt because it’s all about you and what you are

getting – or not getting. And we all know that if you are looking for a way to have your feelings hurt, you will get hurt, especially if you are self-centered and arrogant. You must understand that we cannot successfully lead the church based on our personal feelings, or to satisfy our personal whims and ambitions – rather, the Church must be led, and live, in accordance with Scripture and Anglican tradition. We must submit to the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ who is the Head of the Church. So take your seats under Christ – and at His feet – and let the Bible control your emotions, ambitions, and desires. Align yourselves with the way things are done in the Anglican Church.

### **Approval of the 1662 BCP International Edition –**

It is my pleasure to approve the use of the 1662 BCP International Edition, recently published by InterVarsity Press and now available to the Diocese. This approval derives from the umbrella of GAFCON'S general approval of the 1662 Book of Common Prayer. It seems that its primary differences from the standard Church of England 1662 BCP are that the prayers for Civil Authorities were made more general (for application beyond the British Monarchy), additional occasional prayers were added (as in the 1962 BCP and American 1928 BCP), and the Homily on Justification has been included as an appendix (due to it being commended in the Articles). Here is a link to the 1662 BCP International Edition on the InterVarsity Press website: <https://www.ivpress.com/the-1662-book-of-common-prayer>.

### **Appointments and Preferments –**

My sincere gratitude goes to Sir Innocent Onyenaucheya for serving as President of the Diocesan Knights of St. Christopher for the past two years. It is now my pleasure to appoint Sir Ike Oraedu as the new President of the Knights of St. Christopher for a two-year term.

I am pleased to prefer Rev'd Kingsley Chukwu as a Canon, and Canons Olusegun Adebogun and David Nwanekpe as Archdeacons in our Diocese. May the Lord grant all three of you the grace necessary to serve Him and this Diocese faithfully, to His glory. *Amen.*

### **Dedication of the Diocesan Cathedral –**

On behalf of The Most Rev'd Henry Ndukuba, Archbishop, Metropolitan, and Primate of the Church of Nigeria, it is my great pleasure to invite you to the Dedication of our

Diocesan Cathedral, Holy Trinity Cathedral Church in Houston, Texas, on Saturday, June 26, 2021, at 11:00 a.m. (CST). This will be an important event for our Diocese and for its mission in North America. So, I ask you to join the members of our Cathedral Church to celebrate and give thanks to God as the Cathedral is dedicated for the worship and mission of Christ. If possible, please support our Cathedral with your financial gifts when you are here in Houston, Texas – after all, this is YOUR Cathedral!

If you are planning to attend the Dedication of our Cathedral on June 26, 2021, here are some important details ...

#### Pre-Dedication Dinner –

In addition to individual interest and patronage, Diocesan parishes can be represented at the pre-dedication dinner by reserving a table for their clergy and delegates.

#### Dedication Brochure –

In addition to individual interest and patronage, Diocesan parishes can reserve pages in the Commemorative Dedication Brochure to feature themselves and/or their respective vestry teams. For all information and/or questions about the Cathedral Dedication, you may contact the following:

Sir Charles Onuogu – Dedication Chairman (713-805-1925)

Sir Paul Chukwujekwu – Dedication Media/Print Coordinator  
(281-731-9536)

Also, please send your Dedication brochure photographs to -  
[htcdedicationbrochure@yahoo.com](mailto:htcdedicationbrochure@yahoo.com).

#### Hotel Reservations –

A block of rooms has been dedicated for all Cathedral guests at discount pricing – use the following link to reserve rooms before June 17<sup>th</sup>:  
[https://hiltongardeninn.hilton.com/en/gi/groups/personalized/H/HOUSLGI-HTB-20210625/index.jhtml?WT.mc\\_id=POG](https://hiltongardeninn.hilton.com/en/gi/groups/personalized/H/HOUSLGI-HTB-20210625/index.jhtml?WT.mc_id=POG)

Group Name: Holy Trinity Cathedral Room Block

Group Code: HTB  
Check-in: 25-JUN-2021  
Check-out: 28-JUN-2021  
Hotel Name: Hilton Garden Inn Houston/Sugar Land  
Hotel Address: 722 Bonaventure Way, Sugar Land, Texas 77479  
Hotel Phone: 281-491-7777

#### Contact/Payment –

For more details and payment options, please contact Dedication Chairman Sir Charles Onuogu at 713-805-1925.

#### **Concern for the Federal Republic of Nigeria –**

Many of us are concerned about Nigeria because Nigeria, unfortunately, is bedeviled with incompetent and corrupt leaders, and all the problems that accompany them, including, but not limited to: mass corruption across every stratum of society, injustice, insecurity, civil violence, unemployment, indiscipline, greed, hunger, poverty, loss of human dignity, violations of human rights, breakdowns of law and order, bad roads and poor infrastructure, health and medical crises, nepotism, tribalism, religious bigotry and hypocrisy, selfishness, wickedness, banditry, Islamic terrorism (Boko Haram), the menace of Fulani herdsmen, sexual immorality, and crimes such as kidnapping, robbery, rape, and sexual abuse, to mention a few.

While it is convenient to point fingers at others, both foreign and domestic, we Nigerians must address our complicity in causing – and perpetuating – these problems in Nigeria, and must ask ourselves the following question: “WHAT IS MY ROLE IN SOLVING THESE PROBLEMS?”

I begin by noting that Prayer is absolutely important. But while we must pray, prayer alone will not suffice to solve Nigeria’s problems. In addition to prayer, there must be repentance in both the Church and society. The political leaders of the nation, the leaders of the Church, and all citizens of the country must humbly acknowledge their sins and turn from them, setting examples for all to see. Nigerians must learn to follow the rule of law and to be held accountable for breaking the law without attempting to bribe their way out of trouble with help from unscrupulous legal and political personalities. Nigerians must vote based on truth and principle, not selfish gain. Nigerians must defend and protect their

country from foreign and local bandits. And Nigerians must truly commit themselves to these changes. Otherwise, the nation will go to the dogs.

As John Mason recently wrote,

“We live in an uncertain and troubled world. We need to pray for the leaders of the nations and play our part in contributing to the welfare of people in need around us. Above all, let’s pray that God in his mercy will use the good examples of our lives and our testimony to draw many to the Lord Jesus Christ.”

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# Nurturing the Family Spiritually

Texts: Deuteronomy 6:1-15; Ephesians 4, 5, and 6:1-4

## A. Introduction

Let us now turn our attention to my Episcopal Charge to you for this Synod. Last year I asked Bishop Scott Seely and Bishop Celestine Ironna to speak to the Synod concerning Nurturing the Church and Nurturing the Youth, respectively.

Tonight, I will speak to you concerning the nurture of our families. My rationale is obvious – in the Book of Common Prayer, the fourth purpose for the Institution of Marriage is that marriage is “for the upbuilding of [God’s] kingdom in family, church, and society, to the praise of his holy Name.” As Dr. Stephen Noll has noted, “This purpose is not named in some Anglican Prayer Books, but it is assumed in all.” God’s intention is for the family to play a significant role in the mission of building up “His kingdom ... in the Church and in the Society.” The family can be equipped to do this through spiritual nurturing. There is no doubt, however, that it has become increasingly difficult to nurture our families in the Gospel because of the confusing culture in which we live.

Henry Allen, in his article titled “The Disquiet of Ziggy Zeitgeist,” wrote:

“For the first time in my 72 years, I have no idea what’s going on. I doubt that anyone does. We are all outsiders with no inside to be outside of. The most important thing in our culture-sphere isn’t change but the fact that reality itself is dwindling, fading like sunstruck wallpaper, turning into a silence of the dinner-party sort that leads to a default discussion of a movie.”

We live in a very awkward moment of our human history – a sort of cultural no-man’s land characterized by a dwindling sense of reality. One reason reality appears to be dwindling is because we have abandoned God’s view of reality and have thereby been cast adrift. To recover true reality, we must go back to God and to the basics of nurturing ourselves and our families spiritually. Rob Dreher recently noted,

“In his 1983 Templeton Prize address, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn offered this summary explanation for why all the horrors of Soviet communism came to pass: ‘Men have forgotten God; that’s why all this has happened.’ This answer

is also a valid explanation for the crises enveloping the West today, including the widespread falling away from faith, the disintegration of the family, a loss of communal purpose, erotomania, erasing the boundaries between male and female, and a general spirit of demonic destruction that denies the sacredness of human life. Because men have forgotten God, they have also forgotten man; that's why all this has happened.”

We must return to God by nurturing ourselves and our families in the Gospel. We need to proclaim the truth – and we cannot depend on the church alone to do it – we must start at the grassroots level with our own families. So, what does it mean to nurture?

The word ‘nurture’ means:

1. to feed and protect: to nurture one’s offspring
2. to support and encourage, as during the period of training or development; foster: to nurture promising musicians
3. to bring up; train; educate, rear, develop, nourish

Why is this so important?

## **B. Reasons to Nurture the Family**

1. God commands us to nurture our families.

Deuteronomy 6:4-15

“<sup>4</sup> Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. <sup>5</sup> You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. <sup>6</sup> And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. <sup>7</sup> You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. <sup>8</sup> You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. <sup>9</sup> You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

<sup>10</sup> And when the LORD your God brings you into the land that he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give you, with great and good cities that you did not build, <sup>11</sup> and houses full of all good things that you did not fill, and cisterns that you did not dig, and vineyards and olive trees that

you did not plant, and when you eat and are full, <sup>12</sup> then take care lest you forget the LORD, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. <sup>13</sup> It is the LORD your God you shall fear. Him you shall serve and by his name you shall swear. <sup>14</sup> You shall not go after other gods, the gods of the peoples who are around you <sup>15</sup> for the LORD your God in your midst is a jealous God; lest the anger of the LORD your God be kindled against you, and he destroy you from off the face of the earth.”

Ephesians 6:1-4

“<sup>1</sup> Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. <sup>2</sup> ‘Honor your father and mother’ (this is the first commandment with a promise), <sup>3</sup> ‘that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.’ <sup>4</sup> Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline (nurture, training) and instruction of the Lord.” *(parenthetical added)*

Colossians 3:20-21

“<sup>20</sup> Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. <sup>21</sup> Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.”

2. You agreed to do so at your wedding.

“The union of husband and wife in heart, body, and mind was ordained by God: for the procreation of children and their nurture in the knowledge and love of the Lord; for their mutual joy, and for the help and comfort given one another in prosperity and adversity; and to maintain purity, so that husbands and wives, with all the household of God, might serve as holy and undefiled members of the Body of Christ; and for the upbuilding of his kingdom in family, church, and society, to the praise of his holy Name ...”

“O fathers and mothers, the ruin of your children or their salvation, will, under God, very much depend on you.” C. H. Spurgeon

3. The moral and spiritual condition of the Church and our Society is abysmal, and demands that Christian parents do something about it.

Malcolm Muggeridge captures the terrifying retrograde in our society today. He said:

“So the final conclusion would surely be that whereas other civilizations have been brought down by attacks of barbarians from without, ours had the unique distinction of training its own destroyers at its own educational institutions, and then providing them with facilities for propagating their destructive ideology far and wide, all at the public expense. Thus did Western Man decide to abolish himself, creating his own boredom out of his own affluence, his own vulnerability out of his own strength, his own impotence out of his own erotomania, himself blowing the trumpet that brought the walls of his own city tumbling down, and having convinced himself that he was too numerous, labored with pill and scalpel and syringe to make himself fewer. Until at last, having educated himself into imbecility, and polluted and drugged himself into stupefaction, he keeled over – a weary, battered old brontosaurus – and became extinct.”

It is clear that our secular society cannot help us to recover or be renewed to spiritual and moral health, because it needs help itself!

David Wells, in his book, “Losing our virtue: Why the church must recover its Moral Vision,” writes:

“We have experienced the erosion of Christian character to the point that today no discernible ethical differences are evident when those who claim to be born again are compared with their secular neighbors.”

George Barna also noted that in many cases, “There is no observable difference between the moral behavior of professing Christians and the rest of America.” According to Barna research, 66% of born-again Christians don’t believe in absolute truth; 35% say it’s fine to cheat to get ahead; 75% tell lies regularly; 18% of all abortions are amongst evangelicals; 19% believe that watching pornography is a matter of personal taste rather than of morality. In addition to the above problems are the high divorce rates and the prevalence of non-Biblical beliefs regarding the identity of Christ as both God and man that seem to be dogging the evangelical church.

A recent poll conducted by Ligonier Ministry researchers tells us:

“... that a majority of the general U.S. population rejects the deity of Christ, but now almost a third of American evangelicals agree that He was merely a great teacher. If Jesus’s claim to be God is false, then He was either delusional or deceptive, but He could not have been a great teacher. These results suggest a dire

need for Christians to be taught Christology, the doctrine of the person and work of Jesus Christ. Many professing Christians also appear to be confused about the extent of sin's effects upon the human race. Nearly half of U.S. evangelicals believe that people are good by nature, an idea that cannot be reconciled with the emphatic teaching of the Bible that all people are radically corrupted sinners in need of salvation.”

Despite what they profess, many Christians, when the pressure is on, make decisions and act on the basis of emotion, instinct, feelings, self-interest, external (or peer) pressure, and/or public opinion, rather than on the Word of God and their relationship with Jesus. For many Christians, Jesus may be Savior, but self is king! Instead of committing ourselves to the God revealed in the Bible, we are addicted to feeling good and to a “custom-made” god we can manipulate to provide our wants and excuse our sins as mistakes. This is partly why the atheist, Mark Smith, has declared that “Christianity does not work as advertised.” That hurts! It has become increasingly difficult in our very confusing culture to think and do what is right. We need to change. We need to turn things around. But how do we do that? It's a difficult question because in one sense, only God can really change a person. But there is human responsibility within the framework of divine providence and sovereignty. As Paul put it in Romans 12:1-2,

“I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect ...”

and in Philippians 2:12-13,

“Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.”

God won't do it without us. He works in us and through us to accomplish His will in the world.

## C. The Way Forward: Nurture your Family Spiritually

For us to fulfill the divine mandate of drawing the world back to Christ, we must start at home and re-establish with vigor our commitment to the basics of the faith by nurturing ourselves and our families spiritually. Mother Teresa put it well when she said, “If you want to change the world, go home and love your family.” In other words, if we want to positively impact the world, the church, the society and our lives, we must start with our homes, families, and individual selves. We need to love our families enough to take their spiritual nurture seriously. How do we do that?

### 1. First, nurture yourself and your family in the knowledge of the Gospel.

(1 Corinthians 15:1-5; Romans 1:1-17)

St. Ignatius Loyola told his followers: “You wish to reform the world? Reform yourself, otherwise, your efforts will be in vain.” We must begin with the three “R’s” – Ruin, Regeneration, and Redemption (through penitent faith in Christ). We are saved, sanctified, and sustained by God through the Gospel of grace in Christ. What is the Gospel? Christ lived in perfect obedience and died to pay the penalty for our sins, and was raised on the third day for our justification, victory, and glorification. As a result of His death and resurrection, there is mercy and grace manifested in His gifts of forgiveness of sin, eternal life and hope, righteousness, victory, adoption as children, and full acceptance through faith in Christ. The Gospel addresses both the reality and consciousness of guilt. Salvation is only in Christ! True and eternal security and self-worth do not come from churchmanship, marriage, family, job, ecclesiastical preferments, country, or political party, but in Christ alone. One’s primary commitment must not be to self, family, or country, but to Jesus Christ our Saving King. Make sure that your sense of worth and value is rooted in Christ alone. Believe Christ and share Him with one another in your families. Share and remind each other of the Gospel. Jesus and His Gospel must be at the VERY CENTER of both your personal life and that of your family. Jesus is more important than your partner!

### 2. Second, nurture yourself and your family in the practice of obeying God’s Word and the practice of godliness inside the home and outside the home.

Cultivate the virtues of honesty, truth-telling, promise-keeping, principled behavior, sacrificial love, holiness, faithfulness, commitment, endurance, mutual encouragement and correction, humility, and obedience to God’s Word (Joshua 1; Ephesians 4, 5; Colossians 3, 4). Forgiveness is a big part of marriage and family life. You must deal with bitterness before it destroys your life and your family life. In Ephesians 4 and 5, Paul tells us to seek

unity, to be angry but not to sin, not to steal, to guard our speech, to be kind and forgiving, to be loving, to avoid sexual immorality, and so forth.

Let the word of God control your marriage, your life, and the life of your family as well as your views on politics, race, marriage, gender, and sexuality instead of cultural norms and personal feelings. As Dr. Tony Evans has written:

“God has spoken on the issues at hand, and He has not stuttered. He has spoken about racism. He has spoken about systemic and individual injustices. He has spoken about classism. He has spoken about culturalism. He has spoken about politics. He has spoken about freedom. He has spoken about equity, elitism, indulgences, empathy, and more. God has spoken about all of these subjects. But until we align our hearts, thoughts, words, and actions underneath His overarching rule based on what He has said, we are living in rebellion. Why do we have all of these churches with all of these leaders and all of these believers but still have all of this mess? Because we have failed to bring God’s perspective to bear on the situation. If we are to ever fix this madness and solve this mess – on these issues of injustice, the pain of our shared history and the systems which perpetuate inequity generationally – it will only be due to a right response, collectively as His body, based on God’s Word.”

Sadly, he further noted:

“What many people do today, unfortunately, is pick and choose what they will obey. As a result, we are experiencing a dearth of kingdom disciples who observe all that He has commanded, not just the parts they like.”

We must take the whole counsel of God when addressing the problems and pleasures before us. That is the Christian way of being and living. This needs to be done to keep the downgrade in our modern culture at bay. Alistair Begg was right in stating,

“One of the key reasons for the flabbiness of our spiritual lives is that a generation of Christians is growing up with little awareness of the necessity of dealing with sin. There are sins to be rejected. We must learn where our personal weaknesses lie – and once they are identified, we must be ruthless in dealing with them. Earlier generations called this the ‘mortification of the flesh’ – that is, pronouncing the death sentence upon sin and putting that sentence into daily effect by killing all that sets itself against God’s purpose in our lives.”

In the practice of obedience, parents need to model what they teach and what they expect of their children and should endeavor to be good examples for their children to see and follow. So, be a good example and practice what you preach. Parents must learn to take responsibility for their actions and apologize when they are wrong. Families need to go to church together, pray together, and pray for one another. Let your priorities reflect those of the Kingdom of God and the centrality of Christ in your lives. Let your heart's desire be to draw closer to God, submitting to His direction for your life. Commit yourselves to the pursuit of personal holiness.

3. Third, nurture yourself and your family in the practice of the spiritual disciplines.

The spiritual disciplines are channels of divine grace and empowerment. According to Donald Whitney, the spiritual disciplines are “channels of God’s transforming grace.” Dallas Willard points attention to two categories of spiritual disciplines that will help one grow in grace. Under the category of Abstinence are: solitude, silence, fasting, frugality, simplicity, chastity, secrecy, and sacrifice; and under the category of Engagement are: study, worship, celebration, service, prayer, fellowship, confession, and submission. This is how you continue to make yourself available to Christ for Him to grow you, bless you, mature you, and use you. Pray for one another daily. And you should consider practicing and adopting the spiritual disciplines of the Christian faith as a lifestyle. Read the Bible individually, daily. Conduct family devotions where you read the Bible together, pray together, and sing together. The spiritual disciplines enable us to overcome temptations. We learn as we study the Bible and engage in spiritual reading (not just romantic novels or work-related books) that “Satan gives Adam an apple, and takes away Paradise. Therefore, in all temptations let us consider not what he offers, but what we shall lose” (Richard Sibbes). And we also learn that “The road to destruction is defined by tolerance and permissiveness” (John Stott). Spend a day on a retreat. Share your testimonies of conversion and walk with God. Encourage and challenge one another in the Gospel. Prepare yourselves on Saturday for worship on Sunday. Commit together to the worship, ministry, and mission of the Church as part of your spiritual discipline. Speaking negatively about your church and its leaders is not in the best interest of your family – maintain self-control and Biblical objectivity as you critique matters that affect your family and the church. If you don’t, you will undermine your efforts to help your children know and follow Christ in the community of the church. Don’t poison their minds with your own personal issues. The Anglican tradition has a lot to offer with respect to spiritual nurture and disciplined formation. So, teach your children Anglicanism and use the Book of Common Prayer (please see Appendices D and E on Anglicanism).

4. Fourth, nurture yourself and your family emotionally, physically, materially, relationally, intellectually, and socially.

Take care of one another. Be attentive and sensitive to spoken and unspoken needs. Abraham Maslow, in his book titled “Motivation and Personality” (1954), identified the following hierarchy of needs: Physical needs (food, shelter, comfort, sleep), Safety needs, Love and Belonging needs, Achievement needs, Esteem needs, Aesthetic needs, and Self-Actualization needs. It’s interesting that he didn’t include Spiritual needs as a major category, since Spiritual needs are, in fact, the primary category of need for meaningful living. Without them, ultimate despair is unavoidable because one cannot fulfill the ultimate purpose for which we are created – to glorify God and enjoy Him forever, through faith alone in Christ alone. Having said that, it is important to pay attention to the emotional, social, relational, and material needs of family members. Beware of favoritism, teasing, sarcasm, and cynicism in the family.

Have fun and vacation together. Spend time with one another. Encourage and support one another. Beware of selfishness, pride, and spending too much time on the internet and social media – these things can destroy a marital relationship and family life. Focus on your responsibilities rather than on your rights, but don’t ignore the proper place of rights and fairness in family life.

There should be no room for verbal, physical, or sexual abuse in the home. Strive to ensure that your homes are places of refuge and reconciliation – safe havens where Christ’s presence is felt – not war zones.

5. Fifth, nurture your family by loving one another.

The Bible is clear about agape love, as noted in 1 Corinthians 13. I have spoken extensively on this topic on previous occasions, but I will reiterate that if you don’t pay loving attention to your family (your spouse and children), your efforts to teach them the Bible will fall on deaf ears. You must water the ground with love if you want to get the attention of family members in order to sow the seed of God’s Word in their hearts. Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8,

“Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends ...”

Dr. Gary Chapman describes five languages of love: words of affirmation, quality time, receiving gifts, acts of service, and physical touch. As you love, you should be practically concerned about the emotional, physical, material, relational, intellectual, and social well-being of each member of the family.

6. Finally, nurture yourselves and your families in the essential truths of the Christian Faith because the Lord intends for your homes to be His classrooms.

The Bible commands in Ephesians 6:4, “Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline (nurture) and instruction (admonition) of the Lord” (*parentheticals added*). The Lord wants us to nurture our children spiritually by instructing and admonishing them concerning the things of God as taught in Holy Scripture. Essentially, the Lord is telling fathers to teach their children the Bible!

So, in addition to praying for, loving, taking care of, and involving your children in the ministry, mission, and worship of the Church, teach them essential truths of the Lord from Scripture, such as:

- a. The essence of the Christian Faith is relationship with God and salvation from the wrath of God through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Christianity is Christ, not ritualism, morality, good liturgy (low or high church), or religiosity. Be clear about the reality and nature of sin, its eternal consequences, and how it disrupts our relationships with God and with others. Also be clear about the necessity of repentance and faith in Christ to restore right relationship with God.

Be clear about the Gospel. According to 1 Corinthians 15:1-5, the Gospel is the good news that our Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins, was buried, and, on the third day, was raised from the dead. The consequences of His death and resurrection are the gift of forgiveness; justification; eternal life; sanctification; adoption as God’s children; victory over sin, Satan, and death; and glorification for all those who repent of sin and believe in Christ as their Savior and Lord. The Gospel adequately and satisfactorily addresses the feeling and reality of our guilt before God. His sacrifice was, and is, “a full, perfect and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world.” Jesus and His Gospel must be at the VERY CENTER of the family because He is the solution to our separation from God and all other problems in our human society.

- b. Serving Christ and serving one another are the keys to true fulfillment and happiness. David Platt writes, “In a world where everything revolves around yourself (protect yourself, promote yourself, comfort yourself, and take care of yourself), Jesus says, ‘Crucify yourself. Put aside all self-preservation in order to live for God’s glorification, no matter what that means for you in the culture around you.’” Christian service involves evangelism; discipling young believers; social and community involvement; caring for the poor, needy, and disenfranchised; involvement with ministry in the Church; commitment to foreign missions; and giving financially to the work of God. We need to teach our children to serve and to give sacrificially.
- c. Obeying the Lord Jesus Christ is difficult, hence He gives us the Holy Spirit to empower us to obey Him, love Him, and love others. Obeying the Lord Jesus Christ may be difficult, but it leads to a blessed and happy life (according to Psalm 1 and John 15). As Dr. Charles Stanley usually says, “Obey God and leave the consequences to Him!”
- d. Teach them a Biblical and balanced view of God. It is important to combat the false theology of God that pervades our society today. This is how Richard Niebuhr summarizes the prevalent false view of God, rightly complaining that the modern church has capitulated to the spirit of the age by preaching ...

“... a God without wrath who brought men without sin into a Kingdom without judgment through the ministrations of a Christ without a Cross.”

The Bible teaches that our God is gracious, loving, holy, trustworthy, sovereign, powerful, righteous, and does what He wants without consulting us for our input. God is our Father, Judge, and Friend. God is Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) and yet One. He is Spirit, and a personal relational Being. God is merciful and gracious, forgiving sin yet punishing it. This is how God described Himself to Moses in Exodus 34:5-9:

“The LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, ‘The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity

and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation.' And Moses quickly bowed his head toward the earth and worshiped. And he said, 'If now I have found favor in your sight, O Lord, please let the Lord go in the midst of us, for it is a stiff-necked people, and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for your inheritance.'"

Teach your children that God's kingdom is a monarchy, not a democracy. We have freedom, but not autonomy. God is eternally King and sovereign over all of His creation.

- e. Prayer and faith are necessary for fellowship with God and for dealing with the crises of life. Trusting Christ is the key to eternal salvation and temporal peace, hope, and joy in times of uncertainty.
- f. The Bible is God's inerrant Word, written for us. It is God speaking to us. As Alistair Begg put it,

"The Word of God has been given to God's people in order that in paying attention to it, in obeying its commands, in accepting its promises, and in heeding its warnings, we may not drift away."

The Bible is the rule for what we must believe, and for how we should behave in regard to sex, marriage, relationships, business, and occupation. It tells us who God is and what His will is for the world. The Bible teaches us who we are (identity) and what we have in Christ. Teach your children to read the Bible daily – "No Bible, no breakfast!" (Kay C. James). God wants us to believe and obey the Bible.

- g. Sexual relations belong only in the context of marriage. Homosexuality, fornication, adultery, voyeurism, and other forms of sexual expression outside of marriage are sins. Sexual violence such as rape and sexual molestation are not only sins against God, but assaults on the well-being of the victim, the victim's family, and society as a whole.
- h. Marriage is between one natural-born man and one natural-born woman and is a lifelong mutual commitment between spouses. Marriage requires love, forgiveness, respect, and endurance. God expects husbands to love their wives

as Christ loved the church and expects wives to respect their husbands. Children are to honor and obey their parents. The home must be a safe place for honest and respectful conversation. The home must be void of emotional abuse, domestic abuse, and sexual violence of any kind.

- i. Salvation from Satan's bondage and God's eternal wrath is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, for the glory of God alone. Grace is unmerited favor from God. And Grace teaches us to reject ungodliness. As John Piper notes, "Grace is God's disposition to bless His elect ones based on nothing in us but on the good pleasure of His will alone." The evidence of genuine salvation is faith in Christ as our only Savior and Lord and a life marked by holiness of life and obedience to God's Word. Salvation always leads to a life of obedience to God's Word. Dr. R. C. Sproul has written:

"We are justified by faith alone, but not by a faith that is alone. True faith always yields the fruit of obedience to one degree or another" (*c.f.* Titus 2:11-15).

- j. There is a Day of Judgment coming, when God will punish those who refuse to repent and believe in His Son eternally in Hell, and reward those who followed Christ faithfully eternally in Heaven. It is, therefore, necessary that we prepare ourselves, our families, and our world for that day by repenting of sin, believing in Jesus as Savior, and following Him in obedience as our Lord and King.

Teach your children the whole counsel of God. Heed the warning of Dr. Tony Evans when he noted ...

"What many people do today, unfortunately, is pick and choose what they will obey. As a result, we are experiencing a dearth of kingdom disciples who observe all that He has commanded, not just the parts they like. From God's throne come both righteousness and justice. These are not see-saws upon which to go up and down. Rather, these are twins that are joined at the hip. You don't skip justice and call for righteousness. Likewise, you don't skip righteousness in the name of justice. We are called to a higher calling, that of following the whole counsel of God."

Nurturing the family for spiritual growth and mission in the world is the way we prepare ourselves to engage our secular world, thereby participating in God's mission to engender

true change in our society and world. Nurture yourself and your family spiritually, in Christ, by believing and obeying the Word of God. There is no other way.

## **D. Conclusion**

The Lord wants our lives and our families to be places where He is enthroned as King. He wants us to be His instruments of change and transformation in the world despite the challenges that many of us face. These objectives can be realized by nurturing ourselves and our families with His Word and in His love. Let God use you for His glory, and for the blessing of your families and those around you.

We must trust God, especially in times like this because He is our source of power, peace, and hope, and because He never fails. When it appears you are struggling alone without seeing any progress, please know that there is progress because God's Word never returns void. It will accomplish God's purpose for it. Be patient, be hopeful, and keep at it, knowing that the Lord sees and takes note of your sacrifice, your hard work, and your loving commitment to your families – He will not disappoint you. As you nurture your family, trust God to help you. Trust God to forgive you when you make mistakes (which you will!). The Lord will use you to accomplish His purpose as you pray, trust, and obey Him in all things!

In conclusion, I want to say three things to everyone ...

First, it is not enough to know and grasp theology – we need to encourage our children and spouses to turn to Christ as their Savior and Lord. We all need a relationship with God through Christ. As Charles Spurgeon rightly stated, “I may know all the doctrines of the Bible, but unless I know Christ, there is not one of them that can save me.”

Second, if you are not yet a committed Christian, you must do whatever it takes to avoid spending eternity in hell, where existence is marked by suffering, joylessness, and the excruciating absence of God. What does it take? Repent of your sin and believe in Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord because He satisfied the justice of God for us sinners by paying our penalty when He died on the Cross for us – for us! That is why we call Him our Savior! That is why He is the **ONLY WAY** to get out of Hell and into Heaven. And that is why He is the **ONLY WAY** to have an eternal relationship with the Father. Trust Him now before it is too late!

Third, if you are a Christian, I ask you to do whatever it takes to help non-believers escape eternal punishment in Hell by helping them turn from sin to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. He saved us from eternal wrath and eternal death (suffering in Hell for our sins) by dying for us. I ask you to live a life worthy of the Gospel of Christ, that is, a life marked by holiness, joy, truthfulness, peace, and passion to lead people to Christ. Blaming our culture is not enough – we must take responsibility for our complicity in our cultural downgrade and in its restoration by preaching and living lives worthy of the Gospel. John Stonestreet recently wrote,

“Scripture says woe to those who say that good is evil and that evil is good. That’s a culture-wide feature of our world. Each day, it seems, brings new and audacious ideas aimed at unravelling and mis-ordering God’s very good creation. Our first impulse might be to ‘blame the culture,’ but, instead, it should be to take a hard look in the mirror. If the Church exists to proclaim and bear witness to the rule and reign of Christ, we may find that our culture’s woes aren’t as much the result of a secular occupation as they are the result of a Christian evacuation. Francis Schaeffer noted how Christians think about life in terms of ‘bits and pieces’ instead of ‘totals.’ For example, many Christians who are able to recite core beliefs of the Christian faith struggle to see all of life as it truly is – the Story of creation, fall, redemption, and restoration.”

William L. Watkinson reminds us that ...

“Denunciatory rhetoric is so much easier and cheaper than good works, and proves a popular temptation. Yet is it far better to light the candle than to curse the darkness.”

We must go out there and preach and live the whole counsel of God as written in Holy Scripture so that we can be God’s instruments of evangelization, revival, and restoration.

*Amen.*

*Let us pray:*

Heavenly Father, we are grateful to You for Your many blessings. Make our homes to be places of rest, refreshment, refuge, and renewal. We ask You to fill our lives with joy, laughter, hope, and peace. Help us to love You and each other more and more. Father, we

ask Your blessing on all those to whom You have entrusted the roles of motherhood and fatherhood. May your Holy Spirit constantly inspire and strengthen them. May they continually follow the example of Mary and Joseph, the earthly parents of our Lord Jesus Christ, imitating their fidelity, humility, and sacrificial, self-giving love. We pray that You will grant all parents and children Your abundant grace in this earthly life and finally receive us into Your eternal home, through Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

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

## Appendix A

### **Suffragan Bishops of the Diocese –**

The Anglican Diocese of the West has two Suffragan Bishops: Bishop Scott Seely and Bishop Celestine Ironna, both of whom 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 (in both the United States and 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 now. Please join me in congratulating them!

The primary role of our two Suffragan Bishops, beyond assisting with the administration of the Diocese, is to facilitate church-planting in the Regions assigned to them. Their 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, however, perform confirmations and make parish visits at the direction of the Diocesan Bishop and, if the Primate grants them permission to do so, can perform ordinations at the direction of both the Diocesan Bishop and the Primate.

These are the geographical areas in which our Suffragans will be working:

#### 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, and their wives, Miriam Seely and Caroline Ironna, to serve with humility and joy!

## **Appendix B**

### **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 overarching vision is that the Holy Spirit will help us to go deeper into 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 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 during the past year, but must strive to 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. Please pray for our new Diocesan Office in Houston, Texas, and join us for the celebration at the Cathedral’s dedication next month.
- 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.
- k. 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 prosper in the long-run. Our God, before Whom no secrets are hidden, is watching us all and will reward us according to our works. May God have mercy on the leaders of the Church, and may He 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, which is 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, not 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!