



DIOCESE of
CHRIST our HOPE

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The 10th Synod of the Diocese of Christ Our Hope
Bishop Ordinary Report

Dear brothers and sisters of Christ Our Hope,

Greetings to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I give thanks to the Lord for you and the work of the diocese. I am also equally thrilled by another successful Convocation and Synod meeting this year.

I welcome you to this synod. I want to extend a special welcome to Bishop Jacob Deng Garang Akech from the Province of South Sudan (Diocese of TWIC East) and to Bishop Festus Yeboah Asuamah from the Province of Ghana (Diocese of Sunyani). I also want to officially welcome two new Churches to our Diocese: Grace Anglican Fellowship in Lake Forest II and St. Judes Anglican Church in Huntersville, NC.

It has been a special week. We worshipped and prayed this week. We feasted, fellowshiped, and communed together. What a night last night in the Sanctuary of Wesley Memorial! A special thanks again to the team here at Wesley and for their tremendous hospitality and service this week. A highlight for me was the College of Presbyters where we were able to discuss and dialogue over issues that we are all excited about and issues that need our attention and focus.

While the main content of our gathering has been oriented around the Song of Songs (and many thanks to Bishop Tim Davies for your teaching and presence here), I cannot escape in my thinking Ephesians chapter 4 which I read and discussed in my address to the College of Presbyters and Deacons. I place it here for an archived reminder of our focus this year.

Eph. 4:1 As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. 2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing one another in love. 3 Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. 7 But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. 8 This is why it says: "When he ascended on high, he took many captives and gave gifts to his people." 9 (What does "he ascended" mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? 10 He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) 11 So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, 12 to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. 14 Then we will no

longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. 15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. 16 From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. 17 So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. 18 They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. 19 Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, and they are full of greed. 20 That, however, is not the way of life you learned 21 when you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. 22 You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; 23 to be made new in the attitude of your minds; 24 and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. 25 Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body. 26 "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, 27 and do not give the devil a foothold. 28 Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need. 29 Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. 32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

I am obligated by conscience and office to discuss some very important hopes that I would endeavor to embody as the diocese. I find these listed in the first three passages of chapter 4.

- #1 'for us' to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.
- #2 'for us' to be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.
- #3 'that we' make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

I do not believe that the call to unity and our posture towards it is before truth. Truth produces unity. We contend for the faith once delivered from Jude 3. Yet, unity should follow so closely behind that it cannot be easily differentiated from the truth of God's word, the truth we contend for as this diocese.

I write and address you, as Bishop Ordinary with the following points. Admittedly, there is simply so much to discuss and never enough time. I thank God for our Communications Team particularly Ernie Didot, Lisa Tanico and Wade Tanico who are helping the diocese tell more stories of the many and encouraging activities of the diocese.

First, I offer thanks to God. Thanks for you as a Diocese. It is a humbling and high responsibility to serve alongside you as your Bishop. At the same time, I am delighted to co-labor with Bishops Adam, Paul, Quigg and Steve (in alphabetical order) to discharge our duties to you and for you.

Second, as Bishop in the Anglican Church in North America, I am deeply grieved by what is happening in our larger body. I am grieving that anyone has experienced harm from our leaders. If true, it shouldn't be this way. As a diocese, we bear a tremendous burden to shepherd well. As leaders, our shepherding will present challenges as we are called to confront, rebuke, and admonish. We should bear this burden with humility and patience while also exemplifying courage. Our actions should call us to the higher standard that the Apostle Peter so eloquently speaks to us: *"Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; 3 not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. 4 And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away."* (1 Peter 5)

Third, I give thanks to the Staff of this Diocese. They are a treasure as well. While it is easy to say, "teamwork is dreamwork", this team does exhibit joy and camaraderie that makes it easy to serve together. I am thankful you are able to hear their reports.

Fourth, the Diocesan Council. This group, who purely as volunteers, give the time and energy to serve you for the good governance of the Diocese. I thank them for their service.

Fifth, I am more and more reliant on the Deans of this diocese to help me serve as your bishop. These men, also give of their time and energy to serve in the Spiritual Leadership of our life together. It is clear that the health and vibrancy of our labor will be directly connected to the capable and godly leadership of our Deans and Deaneries. We have been discussing recently the need to reconfigure some of our current Deanery arrangements to better serve the geographic realities as well as the growth of the Diocese. I have set a date of January of 2027 for those new developments to come into effect.

Sixth, the Canon Missioners of our Diocese. I am grateful for these leaders who serve us in mission expansion. A few years ago, we installed the Rev. Dr. Ben Sharpe as Canon for West Virginia. Thanks be to God for his great service that the churches of West Virginia continue to grow. And because of the growth, I see by 2027 a new Deanery of West Virginia. Thank you, Ben. Canon Missioners then serve for a season or so to catalyze an area to help grow and build a Deanery. While Canon Ben is 'retiring' from this work, I am naming The Rev. Brandon Walsh as a new Canon for New England to assist with the growth and development of a truly New England Deanery. You will hear soon of the "New Life happening in New England" of which Brandon and Great Bay Anglican are a part. Thank you, Brandon.

Seventh, I want to publicly celebrate the good work that continues in the Great Plains Missionary District. We are seeing new churches, new ordinands, and new church planters

come together. The internal systems (leadership development, church planting, pastoral care, and financial support) also continue to mature. The next official gathering of the GPMD is December 12 and 13th. Perhaps some of you were touched by Rev. Seth Williamson's presentation on engaging people not connected to the faith or the church yesterday. I have loved seeing the growth of Church of the Ascension in McKinney by conversion growth as well as transfer growth.

Eighth, the direction of the Diocese. For the past 18 months I have worked with all kinds of leaders and people in the diocese to help articulate our mission together. We are articulating 4 concepts of our mission:

- a. Raising up (serving and equipping) new leaders both lay and clergy for the work of the Gospel in this diocese and abroad.
- b. Planting new churches in our diocesan footprint. This year we have approved 9 church planters to move forward with this kind of work in addition to the 10 plus active church plants already in the diocese.
- c. Forming healthy deaneries. As we grow larger, we need to grow smaller.
- d. Launching new dioceses. Jesus said it is more blessed to give than receive. There are more than 170 million people in this nation who are not connected in a meaningful way to Jesus who we would hope to help reach some by seeing new dioceses built that have a geographic focus and intent. It is important to say that down the road, some of our Deaneries and Districts could launch out as new dioceses.

Ninth, I find great encouragement from the practitioners who are leading ministries connected to this diocese. For instance, we are so blessed to have Jenny Noyes as a part of the Diocese of Christ Our Hope leading New Wineskins. We were so blessed to hear from Bethany Talbert and the Wilberforce Center. Sudan Church Partners and Friend of Gahini. And so many more and I fear even sharing this list may result in someone feeling left out. Praise God from whom all blessings flow.

Tenth, Camp Booyah. Now in its eleventh year, Camp Booyah will expand to three sessions this summer with the newest session taking place in New England. I know and want to emphasize that most people form their faith by age 22. I see our diocese having so many amazing expressions of Christ's ministry. And our Next Generation Ministry especially in that middle and high school age seems to be thriving. We also have a summer camp in the Great Plains District led by Rev. Travis Wilson of Christ Church Plano. Thank you, Melissa, and team. It is great work you are doing.

Eleventh, the role of the Diocese in Global Anglicanism. We are deeply and progressively more connected to the broader story of Anglicanism. Whether through GAFCON, led by Bishop Paul Donison as General Secretary, or the men and women who serve around the world in ministry from our diocese, I urge us all to have an eye on our localities as well as the Globe.

Twelfth, The anchor Fund. We made a promise to raise money to help achieve operational sustainability over a period of years. This enables us to fund almost \$800 per year in Church Planting Grants. This year we will expand to Church Planting Grants, Curacy Accelerators, Residencies, and Internships. We need \$52K for the Anchor Fund and another \$37K to support ETNI in this diocese. So, I ask you to give as individuals and churches to this need. Due to some large commitments for the future we need \$500K over the next five years to achieve operational sustainability. Your help in this matter is crucial. Let's finish this year strong.

Honestly, I could go on for so much more. The Rector Development Program, the beauty of episcopal visits, Anglican Studies and our partnership with Gordon-Conwell. The growth of Spiritual Directors, the work of the Colleges, etc.

Brothers and sisters, the Diocese of Christ Our exists to serve the churches of this diocese. It is not and Lord willing will never invert. What we are doing at the diocesan level is to serve you the local churches where the beauty and intersection of the Gospel and discipleship converge.

We live in an amazing time, and we have tremendous challenges ahead of us. Every Christian generation finds themselves in a similar way with different opportunities and challenges. For some good and wise reason, God our Father, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit have placed us here in this day at this time.

I pray that we abide in Jesus and serve so well that we would see more and more men, women, and children come to know him and love him and serve him.

All the best to you in Christ Jesus,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alan J. Hawkins', with a large, stylized initial 'A'.

The Rt. Rev. Alan J. Hawkins
Bishop Ordinary