Thursday October 19, 2017
11:00 – 3:00 p.m. United Thank Offering Workshop at Church of Our Savior
3:00 – 10:00 p.m. Early Arrivals & Check-Ins at Quality Inn Sandhills Convention Center
Vendors & Exhibits set up in Niobrara River Room
Early Council Registrations
**Explore North Platte and Dinner on your own.**

7:30 p.m. Evening Worship & Reception
Church of our Savior
203 West 4th St.
North Platte, NE 69101

8:30 p.m. Dessert Reception at Church of our Savior
Magdalene Circle after Reception – Church of our Savior Library

Friday October 20, 2017
Vendors Open all day in Niobrara River Room.
Chapel available in the East Bound Room.

6:30 a.m. Quality Inn Breakfast Buffet Opens – Riverfront Terrace
*Free for Annual Council Attendees staying at the Quality Inn, $7.50 for non-hotel guests*
7:00 a.m. Centering Prayer – East Bound Room
7:30 a.m. Council Registration Opens
8:30 a.m. Annual Council Begins
Morning Worship
Small Group Discussions
Welcome and Call to Order
Bishop’s Address
10:30 a.m. Break
10:50 a.m. Business Resumes
12:30 p.m. Box Lunch – Loup River Room
1:30 p.m. Business Resumes
Keynote Speaker
Small Group Discussions
Appointments & Elections
Ballot
3:00 p.m. Break – Snack available
3:30 p.m. Business Resumes
Financial Presentations
Bishop’s Cross
5:30 p.m. Meeting Recesses for the day
6:15 p.m. Festival Eucharist – Clergy Red Stoles
Church of our Savior
203 West 4th. St.
North Platte NE 69101

7:30 p.m. Banquet with Cash Bar - Dinner Buffet will be served upon arrival in the Calamus and Snake River Rooms

Saturday October 21, 2017

Vendors Open all day in Niobrara River Room.
Chapel available in the East Bound Room.

6:30 a.m. Quality Inn Breakfast Buffet Opens – Riverfront Terrace
*Free for Annual Council Attendees staying at the Quality Inn, $7.50 for non-hotel guests*

7:00 a.m. Centering Prayer – East Bound Room

7:30 a.m. Women’s Ministries Meeting – North Loop River Room
AA Meeting – Middle Loup River Room

8:00 a.m. Council Resumes
Morning Worship
Small Group Discussions

8:30 a.m. Discussion and Voting on Resolutions

11:45 a.m. Invitation to the 151st Annual Council

12:00 p.m. Meeting Adjourns
All State Altar Guild Meeting – North Loop River Room
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Church</th>
<th>Name(s)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ALLIANCE, St. Matthew’s</strong></td>
<td>Coke McClure, Clergy</td>
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<td>Rick Deans, Delegate</td>
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<td>Charles Plantz, Delegate</td>
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<td><strong>COLUMBUS, Grace Church</strong></td>
<td>Jan With, Clergy</td>
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<td>Tammy Lassen, Delegate</td>
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<td><strong>ARAPAHOE, St. Paul’s</strong></td>
<td>Karen Watson, Clergy</td>
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<td>Ashley Groves, Delegate</td>
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<td>Corey Groves, Alternate</td>
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<td><strong>COZAD, St. Christopher’s</strong></td>
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<td><strong>BASSETT, St. Mary’s</strong></td>
<td>Randy Goeke, Clergy</td>
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<td>Linda Bauger, Delegate</td>
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<td>Mike Skulavik, Visitor</td>
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<td><strong>CREIGHTON, St. Mark’s</strong></td>
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<td><strong>BELLEVUE, Holy Spirit</strong></td>
<td>Marilyn Hasemann, Clergy</td>
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<td><strong>CRETE, Trinity Memorial</strong></td>
<td>Christine Grosh, Clergy</td>
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<td><strong>DE WITT, St. Augustine’s</strong></td>
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<td><strong>ELKHORN, St. Augustine</strong></td>
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GRAND ISLAND, St. Stephen’s
Robert Lewis, Clergy
Bob Allison, Delegate
Kiley Keck, Delegate
Dave Jepson, Delegate
Ellen Lewis, Guest
Edwin Lewis, Guest

HARRISBURG, Good Shepherd
Christine Plantz, Clergy

HARVARD, St. John’s
Melvin Sukup, Delegate

HASTINGS, St. Mark’s Pro Cathedral
Katie Hargis, Clergy
Marsha Sukup, Delegate
Lyndel Lewis, Delegate
Katharina Schwidtal, Delegate

HOLDREGE, St. Elizabeth’s
Karen Watson, Clergy
Kim Kirwan, Delegate

HYANNIS, Calvary Church
Coke McClure, Clergy
Sharon Applegarth, Delegate

KEARNEY, St. Luke’s
Stephanie Swinnea, Clergy
Richard Kauders, Delegate
Jason Barney, Delegate
Pauline Machard, Delegate
Cynthia Dennis, Alternate
Evie Gulachie Johnson, Guest
Sam Swinnea, Guest
Nancy Peak, Guest
Chuck Peak, Clergy

KIMBALL, St. Hilda’s
Christine Plantz, Clergy

LEXINGTON, St. Peter’s
Kathy Thomsen, Delegate

LINCOLN, Holy Trinity
Susanna DesMarais, Clergy
Dr. John Long, Clergy
Dan Coffman, Clergy
Sue Everett, Delegate
Jane Janesch, Delegate
Roxane Graham, Alternate
Nancy Coffman, Guest
Bonnie Borden, Guest

LINCOLN, St. David’s
Tim Anderson, Clergy
Sarah Grubb, Clergy
Zoe Holland, Delegate
Jo Bomberger, Alternate

LINCOLN, St. Mark’s on the Campus
Jerry Thompson, Clergy
Jim Karas, Delegate
John Flint, Delegate
Beth Hemmer, Delegate

LINCOLN, St. Matthew’s
Amanda Gott, Clergy
Verneda Kelly, Clergy
Bob Snow, Clergy
Heather Bauer, Delegate
John Jones, Delegate
Paula Jones, Delegate
Rod Bauer, Delegate
Jeff Sneller, Delegate
Don Rabbe, Alternate
Ellen Snow, Guest

McCOOK, St. Alban’s
Brad Brauer, Clergy
Steve Haynes, Delegate
Daniel Stramel, Delegate
Marilyn Brandt, Guest

MITCHELL, Holy Apostles
Sheryl Kester-Beyer, Clergy
Chris Kester-Beyer, Clergy
Steve Johnson, Delegate
Marilyn Johnson, Guest
MULLEN, St. Joseph’s
None Available

NEBRASKA CITY, St. Mary’s
None Available

NORFOLK, Trinity Church
Gordon Braun, Delegate
Brad Brooks, Delegate
Jeff White, Delegate

NORTH PLATTE, Our Savior
Jeffrey Nelson, Clergy
Chris Vieyra, Delegate
Helen Lindley, Delegate
Howard Waples, Delegate
Curt Bennett, Guest

OGALLALA, St. Paul’s
Susan Peterson, Delegate

OMAHA, All Saints
Marisa Thompson, Clergy
Kyle Martinez, Clergy
Bryan Peterson, Clergy
Robert Brown, Clergy
Lynne Bacon, Clergy
Roy Phillips, Delegate
Kim Phillips, Delegate
Carol Anderson, Delegate
Bill Anderson, Delegate
Jan Rowley, Delegate
Craig O’Connor, Delegate
Sam Brown, Alternate
Tracey Peterson, Alternate
Meredith Bacon, Alternate
Maureen O’Connor, Guest

OMAHA, Church of the Resurrection
Betsy Bennett, Clergy
Dorothia Seldon, Delegate
Peggy Mitchel, Delegate

OMAHA, St. Andrew’s
John Schaefer, Clergy
Diane Pike, Clergy

Tony Anderson, Clergy
Steve Karcher, Clergy
Lois Westfall, Delegate
Shaun Rife, Delegate
Camille Culp, Delegate
Andy Hawekotte, Delegate
Nancy Ponec, Delegate
Ben Bryan, Alternate
Wayne Culp, Executive Commission

OMAHA, St. Martin of Tours
Kim Roberts, Clergy
Beth Mincer, Delegate
Keith Winton, Alternate
Mark Kowalski, Guest

OMAHA, Trinity Cathedral
Craig Loya, Clergy
Steven King, Clergy
Ellen Ross, Clergy
Teresa Houser, Clergy
Erin Van Zee, Delegate
John Williamson, Delegate
Kyle Smith, Delegate
Debbie Andrews, Delegate
Joe Thompson, Delegate
Carol Schrader, Standing Committee
Bill Dunbar, Guest

OSHKOSH, St. George’s
None Available

PAPILLION, St. Martha’s
Ernesto Medina, Clergy
Nancy Huston, Clergy
Wes Agar, Clergy
Beth Agar, Delegate
Marjorie Shaw, Delegate
Dario Ghersi, Delegate

PLATTSMOUTH, St. Luke’s
Mavis Hall, Clergy
Ellen Olson, Clergy
Mike Hall, Delegate
Celine Wilcox, Delegate
RUSHVILLE, St. Mary’s - Holly
John Adams, Clergy
Jerry Wellnitz, Delegate
Pat Wellnitz, Guest
Kit Mackinzie, Guest

SCOTTSBLUFF, St. Francis
Mark Selvey, Clergy
Karen Anderson, Clergy
Steve Trickler, Delegate
Cory Foster, Delegate
Jane Hunter, Alternate

SEWARD, St. Andrew’s
Pam Williams, Clergy
Ron Naugle, Delegate
Stephanie Rouse, Delegate
Cal Williams, Visitor

SIDNEY, Christ Church
Tar Drazdowski, Clergy
Beth Fiegenschuh, Delegate
Jim Drazdowski, Alternate

TECUMSEH, Grace Church
None Available

VALENTINE, St. John’s
Steve Meysing, Clergy

DIOCESE STAFF
Scott Barker, Bishop
Elizabeth Easton, Canon to the Ordinary
Betsy Bennett, Archdeacon
Beth Byrne, Director of Finance
Lindsey Rowe, Diocesan Administrator
James Dowd, Monk in Residence

VISITORS & GUESTS
Dwight Zscheile – Keynote Speaker
Carol Ott, Daughters of the King
Suzanne Titus, Daughters of the King
Rebecca Smith, Daughters of the King
Sr. Elizabeth-Sojourner, Recovery Commission
Benjamin Thomas, The Saint Francis Foundation
Cheryl Hejl, Cursillo
Robert Schlismann, Clergy, St. Luke’s ELCA
Carol Schlismann, St. Luke’s ELCA
Ellie Thober, Clergy
FRIDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2017
The 150th Annual Council of the Episcopal Diocese of Nebraska was held at the Sandhills Convention Center in North Platte Nebraska, October 20 – 21, 2017, the Rt. Rev. J. Scott Barker, Eleventh Bishop of Nebraska, presiding.

Centering Prayer was available in the East Bound Room at 7:00 am. Council Registration opened at 7:30 am.

The meeting opened at 8:30 with Morning prayer lead by Brother James Dowd and Music lead by The Rev. Tony Anderson.

Small Group Discussions – Getting Acquainted.

BUSINESS SESSION BEGINS

Call to Order and Welcome
There was an introduction and welcome from The Rev. Dr. Jeffrey Nelson, Church of our Savior, North Platte and a welcome from the Mayor of North Platte, Dwight Livingston

Council Committee Appointments
The following appointments were made prior to this Annual Council to serve this body in accordance with Title I, Canon 3 Section 3 of our Canons. You can refer to page 8 in your booklet to see these Committee Appointments
  Committee on Elections – Bryan Peterson, Chair
  Dispatch of Business – Tom Jones
  Committee on Arrangements – Lindsey Rowe, chair, & People of Holy Trinity
  Credentials – Chris Plantz
  Courtesy Resolutions – John Adams
  Parliamentarian – Woody Bradford
  Legislation Committee – Woody Bradford, David Gardels, Nancy Huston, & Tom Jones
  Resolutions Committee – Ernesto Medina & Betsy Bennett
  Committee to Review the Minutes – Elizabeth Easton & Lindsey Rowe

Report of Credentials
Bishop Barker called on the Rev. Chris Plantz for a report of the Committee on Credentials. The report was not ready at the time she was called upon.

Election of Secretary and Treasurer
Secretary, The Rev. Canon Elizabeth Easton was nominated by The Very Rev. John Schaefer. All in favor by acclamation. Treasurer, Jeff Pirruccello was nominated by Erin Rhian. All in favor by acclamation.

**General Announcements**
Exhibits, Daughters of the King chapel, reports must be scheduled with Dispatch of Business, Brother James, Gift Baskets.

The Rev. Chris Plantz came back and reported that 44 out of 53 Congregations were represented and 58 Clergy, a quorum was present.

**Bishop’s Address:**
The Bishop addressed the Council. A full version can be found at the end of the proceedings.

Small Group Discussions –Responding to the Bishop’s Address.

**Break**
As people settle back in a film of the Presiding Bishop Michael Curry was shown.

**Clergy Changes**
The Rev. Canon Elizabeth Easton reported on the Clergy changes since last council.

**Priests Ordained Since Last Council:**
- Tony Anderson (Serving St. Andrew’s, Omaha)
- Kyle Martindale (Serving All Saints, Omaha)
- Jan With (Serving Grace Church, Columbus)

**Priests Serving in Nebraska from Other Denominations:**
- The Rev. Peter Jark-Swain (Serving Trinity, Norfolk)
- The Rev. Steve Meysing (Serving St. John’s, Valentine)

**Deacons Ordained**
- Teresa Houser (Serving Trinity Cathedral, Omaha)

**Priests Transferred to Other Dioeceses by Letters Dimissory:**
- Jason Emerson – Diocese of East Tennessee

**Priests Received from Other Dioeceses by Letters Dimissory**
- The Rev. Amanda Gott – Diocese of Connecticut (Serving St. Matthew’s, Lincoln)
- The Rev. Steven King – Diocese of Kansas (Serving Trinity Cathedral, Omaha)
- The Rev. Steven Karcher – Diocese of San Joaquin (Serving St. Andrew’s, Omaha)

**New Bishop’s Society Curate**
- The Rev. Tony Anderson (Serving St. Andrew’s, Omaha)

**Priests serving in Nebraska, resident in other Dioceses**
- Stephanie Swinnea (Serving St. Luke’s, Kearney)
- Katie Hargis (Serving St. Mark’s Pro-Cathedral, Hastings)

**Priests Retired**
- Bill Graham,
- Jerry Ness,
Catherine Scott,
Ellie Thober

Deacons Retired
Robin McNutt

Introduce Seminarians:
Diaconate:
Greg Burke, from St. Mark’s Pro-Cathedral in Hastings

Priesthood:
Clare Atkins, from St. Andrew’s in Omaha
Keith Winton, from Church of the Resurrection in Omaha

Parish Changes since Council:
The following have announced their retirement in the coming year:
Larry Parrish, St. Thomas, Falls City
Christine Plantz, St. Hilda’s & Good Shepherd of the Plains
Karen Watson, St. Paul’s & St. Elizabeth’s

Priests Deceased, Deacons Deceased, Prayer for Deceased
Priests Deceased Since Last Council:
The Rev. Lyle Martin
The Rev. Phil Chapman
The Rev. Don Overton

Let us pray. Eternal Lord God, you hold all souls in life: Give to your whole church in paradise and on earth your light and your peace; and grant that we, following the good examples of those who have served you here and are now at rest, may at the last enter with them into your unending joy; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Report from Resolutions Committee
The Rev. Ernesto Medina reported that they received no non-legislative resolutions.

Discussion on Submitted Resolutions
The Rev. Marisa Thompson explained that it would require two years before the resolutions would fully be in effect. Thompson talked about the proposed resolutions and took time for clarifying questions. Each resolution was given time for discussion. It was explained that any amendments to the resolutions must be submitted in writing.

Presentation of the Diocese of Nebraska 150 Celebration
Presented by Noelle Ptocey

Bishop’s Appointments
The Bishop and Trustees of the Diocese are selected by nomination of the Bishop and with the approval of the Annual Council. Before nominating new folks to serve on this body, the Bishop wished to thank the following people whose terms on Bishop & Trustees are coming to a conclusion at this year’s end: Susanna DesMarais, Nan Smutko, and Robert Harding.
Bio’s for the appointed members can be found on page 18 of the annual council booklet. For the coming year we need 3 lay persons and 1 clergy to serve on Bishop & Trustees. In accordance with Title I Article 15, section One of our canons The Bishop nominated the following individuals to serve 3-year terms on B&T beginning at the first meeting of that body in 2018 with that term to expire at the end of 2020:

  John Schaefer  
  Darlene Percival  
  Jessup Wilson  
  John Selzer

These appointments require approval by the Council, pursuant to Article 15, Section 2.  
**Approved by Acclamation**

Commission on Ministry. Bio’s for the appointed members can be found on page 19 of the council booklet. The Commission on the Ministry of the Diocese is also selected by nomination of the Bishop and with the approval of the Annual Council. There are 12 members (six clergy and six lay persons) each serving three-year terms that can be twice extended.

This year, three of our retiring members of the Commission on Ministry are also eligible to serve one more term. Therefore, I wish to both thank:

  Margaret Schaefer  
  John Long  
  Karen Watson

And in accordance with Title I Canon 7, the Bishop nominated these same individuals to each serve another 3-year terms on the Commission on the Ministry beginning at the first meeting of that body in 2018 with that term to expire at the end of 2020.

Will all those in favor signify by saying, “Aye.”  
**Approved by Acclamation.**

Executive Commission. Bio’s for the appointed members can be found on pages 14 and 15 of the council booklet. Under provisions of Title II Canon 5, the Executive Commission of the diocese is partly appointive and partly elective. Six clergy and six laity are elected by annual council – two of each order every year we meet – and another 6 members (3 in each order) are to be appointed by the Bishop, two at each council. For your appointive members beginning service in 2018 and serving three-year terms to conclude at the end of 2020 the Bishop Appointed:

  Teresa Houser  
  Danny Leonard

Under provisions of Title I, Canon 3, Section 5(b), The Bishop appointed  
  Chancellor – Dana “Woody” Bradford  
  Church Attorney – Joe Jones
Archdeacon – Betsy Blake Bennett

Additional Appointments and Committee Chairs can be found on pages 10 and 11 of the Council Booklet. The following appointments do not require the approval of the council.

Under provisions of Title I, Canon 3, Section 5(b), The Bishop appointed
- Chancellor – Dana “Woody” Bradford
- Church Attorney – Joe Jones
- Archdeacon – Betsy Blake Bennett

Diocesan Committee Chairs:
- Bishop Kemper School Board – Betsy Bennett Judi Yeates
- Camp Canterbury – Noelle Ptomey
- Clergy Compensation – John Schaefer
- Commission on Ministry – Margaret Schaefer
- Commission on Scouting – Wes Agar
- Committee on Elections – Bryan Peterson
- Disaster Preparedness – Wes Agar and Charles Plantz
- Ecumenical Relations – Tim Anderson
- Education for Ministry – Ernesto Medina
- Episcopal Relief and Development – Christine Plantz
- Global Mission – Karen Watson
- Historiographer – Jo Behrens
- Legislation – Dana “Woody” Bradford
- Province VI Representative – Chris Plantz
- The Nebraska Episcopalian – Keith Winton
- UTO – In Transition
- Women’s Ministry – Christine Grosh

Approved by acclamation

**Reports from Diocesan Ministries**

Joe Thompson — Cursillo
Chris Plantz - Episcopal Relief and Development
Betsy Bennett — Upcoming deacon events
Teresa Houser — Friends of Tamar / Magdalene House
  - Roll call of remembrance on All Souls Day.
Sandra Squires — UTO.
Tom Jones — Youth outreach.

**Noonday Grace by The Rev. Tom Jones and Boxed Lunch**

**BUSINESS SESSION RESUMES**

**Introduction of Keynote Speaker**
The Rev. Sarah Miller introduced our Keynote Speaker The Rev. Dwight Zscheile
Keynote Address – Dwight Zscheile
An Episcopal priest, associate professor of congregational mission and leadership at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota, and consultant with The Missional Network. He also serves part-time as associate priest at St. Matthew’s Episcopal Church in St. Paul. He is author of The Agile Church: Spirit-Led Innovation in an Uncertain Age (Morehouse Publishing, 2014), People of the Way: Renewing Episcopal Identity (Morehouse Publishing, 2012) and The Missional Church in Perspective: Mapping Trends and Shaping the Conversation (with Craig Van Gelder, Baker Academic 2011) and editor of Cultivating Sent Communities: Missional Spiritual Formation (Eerdmans, 2012). A graduate of Stanford University (BA), Yale University (MDiv) and Luther Seminary (PhD, Congregational Mission and Leadership), he previously served congregations in Virginia and Connecticut. Dwight’s experience growing up in a secular home in California has shaped his commitment to helping the church cultivate Christian community with new populations and generations in today’s changing world.

Small Group Discussion—Checking in After Workshops

First Election Ballot. Report of Committee on Elections
The Rev. Bryan Peterson, Chair of the Elections Committee, presented to the members of Council the vacancies needing to be filled on the Standing Committee, Executive Commission, Disciplinary Board, and General Convention. Peterson provided an explanation of balloting process and answered questions of the Council.

First election ballot took place.

Break

Treasurer’s Report
Beth Byrne opened with prayer. A pre-recorded video of the Treasurer Jeff Pirruccello was shown.

Beth again addressed the council. She began by saying that it has been another good year in the diocese. She reviewed the information of the combination of the three legal entities that make up the Diocese: The Diocese of Nebraska, Bishop & Trustees, and the Bishop Clarkson Episcopal Foundation. Beth reviewed the trends of revenue over expenses and investment earnings.

Beth reported on: The sale of property in 2015, the land on the Tri-Faith Campus, and the church in Wymore. Contributions in 2015 was the highest it has been in the last 10 years as the result of the Raucher gift. The Bishop’s Society has received the John & Libby Lauritzen Foundation Matching grant of $644,607 plus commitments to be paid in the years 2106-2019 of $143,163 brings in a total of $787,775. She reviewed the Diocese revenues compared to the expenses. She reported on Parish Assessments and Faith Asking.
Beth Byrne presented the 2017 Proposed budget found on page 70 of the Council Booklet with an introduction to the budget on page 68 and 69.
A motion was made to approve changing faith asking formula to 10% on the first $150,000 of normal operating income, 13% on the next $100,000 and 15.5% on normal operating income greater than $350,000.

The motion was moved by Mark Selvey and seconded to approve the changes of faith asking: Approved by acclamation.

Vote on 2018 Budget:
Motion to approve budget. Moved and seconded.
Kyle Martindale: Proposed budget for 2018 cost of living increase for administrative assistant. Offering motion to amend the budget: 42,754 and create new line for EYE attendance and chaperones of $5,000.

John Adams: Concerns — Curious whether rest of diocesan staff has done footwork for package and description for Lindsey’s replacement. If not, amending it feels like handicapping it. Other concern is that EYE is good, but accessible to only a few people. Concern of putting so much money into program for a few people.

Bishop Barker: Budget prepared before Lindsey’s resignation.

Susanna DesMarais: Concern that salary for admin assistant is low for what we want.

Ben Varnum: Leave where it is.

Chris Plantz: Exec Commission talked about this. There is $3000 under “other youth and young adults” that could be used for EYE chaperones.

John Klint: Opposed to amendment as a hiring manager, the salary listed for the position is too low and you would not attract quality people.
Kyle: Rescinds the motion.(But can’t)
Motion rejected by acclamation.

Susanna DesMarais: Bishop has not taken a raise. What does that say?
Bishop Barker: Did take a raise last year.

Sandra Squires: No money to province level.
Beth Byrne: Look at p. 69. Exec Commission determined Province is currently not a mission priority.

Ernesto Medina: Call the question.
Approved by acclamation.

Budget approved by acclamation.
After the vote Beth, provided clarification about the Bishop’s Salary. Beth spoke about the Treasurers’s Chest Newsletter, warned about scammers, spoke about the Parochial reports that are due March 1. She also spoke about employee benefits and audits.

**Presentation of The Bishop’s Cross.**
The Rev. Benedict Varnum gave the introduction for Dr. Sandra Squires.
The Rev. Mavis Hall gave the introduction for The Rev. Catherine Scott.

The Rev. Tar Drazdowski spoke about the LaPaloma Campaign, the offerings from the festival eucharist will be donated to this campaign.

**Report from the Election Committee**
The Rev. Bryan Peterson reported the following people were elected:
Disciplinary Board:
- The Rev. Deacon Wes Agar, St. Martha’s, Papillion – Clergy
- The Rev. Jan With, Grace Chruch, Columbus – Clergy
- Doug Kramer, St. Luke’s, Kearney - Lay

Standing Committee:
- The Rev. Susanna DesMarais, Church of the Holy Trinity, Lincoln – Clergy
- Nicole Cloudt, St. Mary’s, Blair – Lay
- Carol Schrader, Trinity Cathedral, Omaha - Lay

Executive Commission:
- The Ven. Betsy Bennett, Church of the Resurrection, Omaha – Clergy
- The Rev. Karen Watson, St. Paul’s, Arapahoe & St. Elizabeth, Holdgege – Clergy
- Dr. Adeleke Badejo, St. Luke’s, Kearney – Lay
- Lesley Dean, Church of the Resurrection, Omaha - Lay

Business Adjourns for the day.

**Festival Eucharist**
At Church of our Savior.

**Dinner Buffet and Cash Bar**
At Quality Inn – Sandhills Convention Center in the Calamus and Snake River Rooms.

**Saturday, October 8**
Centering Prayer took place at 7:00 in the East Bound Room

The Women’s Ministries group gathered for Breakfast North Loop River Room, and an AA meeting was scheduled in the Middle Loup River Room, at 7:30 am.
The meeting opened with Morning prayer lead by Brother James Dowd and the Rev. Dwight Zscheile and Music The Rev. Tony Anderson

Small Groups – Saturday Morning Check in
BUSINESS MEETING RESUMES

Debate and Voting on the Proposed Resolution
The Rt. Rev. J. Scott Barker addressed the council on decorum around debate and voting:
- Seeking will of the Spirit
- Address the dais – not a debate
- Introduce yourself and tell us if you are YEA or NAY up front
- Speak only once
- No applause or booing

Report from Legislative Committee
Woody Bradford, Chancellor - Discussion and Voting on the Submitted Resolutions found on Page 20 of the Council Booklet.

The Rev. Ernesto Medina state that council must vote by orders. Passed clergy. Passed lay.

The Rev. Marisa Thompson made the motion for Resolution 2, Moved by Woody. Seconded. Marisa reviewed the contents.
Kyle Martindale called the question. Passed.
Clergy passed. Lay passed. (Unanimous both orders.)

The Rev. Marisa Thompson made the motion for Resolution 3 Moved by Woody. Seconded.

Marisa Thompson indicated that it would be voted on in parts.

Part I. Section 4. Selene Wilcox St. Luke’s Plattsmouth amendment. Add “...,electronic, at least one of which shall be in person” to first line. Passed by voice vote.

Canon 5. Section 1.3. Ernesto Medina amendment. Replace second use of ‘appointed’ to ‘approved’. And replace ‘of each order’ with ‘one clergy and one lay’. So in entirety: “One clergy and one lay being approved by each Annual Council.”

Ben Varnum: If Annual Council does not approve, don’t the Canons allow Bishop to make appointment? Woody — Yes, but unlikely to appoint that same person.

Amendment approved by voice.
Canon 5. Section 1.7.
Ben Varnum: “Any person holding a position with a salary drawn wholly or in part from the diocesan budget or funds governed by B&T shall not be eligible to hold a voting position int he B&T.”

Passed by voice.
Canon 5. Section 1.2. Charles Plantz amendment: Remove “the Standing Committee from the second sentence and replace by “The elected members”.

Ernesto Medina. As President of the Standing Committee, concurs.

Amendment passes.

Ben Varnum: Amendment to Canon 5 Section 1.2. Clause “one of each order” to read “one clergy and one lay”.
Passes by voice.


Ernesto Medina moves for dividing the question. Passes.

Ernesto Medina then moved on to voting on Part 3. Section 1.
Clergy passes. Lay passes.

Part 2.
And Part 3 to remove gendered language.

Discussion:
Lois Westphal St. Andrew’s. canon 10 Section 4.4 Change ‘his’ direction to ‘the Bishop’s direction.

Part 2.
Charles Plantz. Moves amendment that it is effective at the end of Annual Council 2018.
Marissa Thompson. Would like to change gendered language immediately.

Charles Plantz asks Chancellor for ruling about whether anything we vote on in Parts 2 or 3 will be effective before AC 2018.

Woody Bradford: Suggest that Part is not effective until a year from now. But Part 3 to remove the gendered language from position noted in the language can be voted on separately so it goes into effect at this time.

Part 2: Modify canons will come into effect at the end of Annual Council 2018.

Ernesto Medina moves to divide the question so we vote on these separately.

Bishop Barker: We have a motion on the floor.
Ben Varnum: Language on current amendment makes dividing the question unnecessary.
Jeffery Nelson: In Part 2, is Bishop and Trustees taking on some or all the duties of Executive Commission?
Marissa Thompson: B&T will take on canonical duties of Exe Comm, but non-canonical duties may go to another group at the Bishop’s discretion.

Offers amendment to change to change the word ‘some’ to ‘the’ duties.

Ben Varnum: Currently have amendment on the floor to add the 2018 language.

Vote on amendment to add to Part 2 language saying it comes into effect “at the end of voting at the end of Annual Council 2018.”
Woody — the amendment is out of order. The newly constituted B&T will not take effect until 2018. Withdraws objection if understood that current B&T continues.

The amendment passes by voice vote.

Jeffery Nelson: Change ‘some’ to ‘the’.
Ellie Thober: Those duties could be assigned to the people who had been the Exec Council?
Kyle Martindale: Clarification on ‘some’. Better to say “the canonical duties” instead of “some duties”.
Ben Varnum: Particular duties to be changed are listed in sections of this part.

Amendment passes by voice.

Parts 2 and 3 combined.
Main motion
Vote by orders. Passes clergy unanimously. Lay order unanimously.

Bishop Barker closes with prayer.

Reports Accepted by Title
The Rt. Rev J. Scott Barker directed the Council’s attention to the reports to be accepted by title found on page 28 of the council booklet. There was one correction on the Clergy Compensation report on page 38, to change 2017 to 2018. Heather Bauer the Altar Guild Coordinator requested that the Altar Guild be removed from the Women’s Ministries report, because men are involved in the Altar Guild. All reports were accepted by title.

150th Annual Council Courtesy Resolutions
Right Reverend Sir, Members of the Council, special guests and visitors,
I am honored to present the following Courtesy Resolutions on behalf of the 150th Annual Council of the Diocese of Nebraska:

Be it resolved that this 150th Annual Council of the Diocese of Nebraska, meeting in the City of North Platte on October 21st, 2017, does acknowledge, affirm, and express our gratitude:
For our Bishop, The Right Reverend J. Scott Barker, who guides and cares for this diocese in a multitude of different ways, as he travels from east to west and back again throughout the year, a man who serves us with his whole life and presence and has done so wisely and compassionately for six years.

For our former bishops, The Rt. Rev. Joe Burnett and The Rt. Rev. James Krotz, to whom we send fondest greetings as they continue to love and serve God and God’s Church. And for our very former and yet strangely present bishops, The Rt. Revs. Beecher and Clarkson, we give humorous thanks.

For the delegates and alternates duly elected to represent the parishes of the Diocese of Nebraska, who have offered their time and energy to conduct the business of this Council, and for the Daughters of the King and all who have prayed for us during this meeting.

For The Reverend Jeffrey Nelson and members of Church of Our Savior, North Platte, who served as our hosts during this Annual Council and offered gracious hospitality and beautiful worship during our time together.

For the members of the Diocesan Staff; Lindsey Rowe our Diocesan administrator, for whom we give special thanks and prayers as she leaves us to embark on a new career at the beginning of November; Beth Byrne, Director of Finance; The Reverend Canon Elizabeth Easton, Canon to the Ordinary; The Venerable Betsy Bennet, Archdeacon of the Diocese; as well as Jeff Pirruccello, Treasurer; Woody Bradford, Parliamentarian and Chancellor; The Reverend Tom Jones, Dispatch of Business, and The Rev. Deacon Bryan Peterson in his wise administration of the Hare system of voting; all of whom we give thanks for their tireless labor in preparing and their committed dedication to overseeing the productive work of this Council.

For the members of all the Committees of the Diocese, who continue to do the work of the diocese diligently and prayerfully, pointing us always to the kingdom of God in our very own state.

For Brother James Dowd, monk-in-residence, who graces us with prayer and presence throughout this diocese and has probably seen a lot of corn and soy along the way—may you have many long years with us! And for Fr. Tony Anderson leading us in musical praise.

For our guest and keynote speaker, The Rev. Dwight Zschiele who brings insight and urges innovation in the church as we move into the future as Christians.

For the life and witness of all the faithful departed, especially for The Rev. Phil Chapman, The Rev. Lyle Martin, and The Rev. Don Overton we pray for them and their families, that they may be sustained by the love of God and their communities, and that, casting all their cares on the Lord, they may know the consolation of God’s love.

For our newly ordained and newly arrived clergy: The Rev. Tony Anderson (St. Andrew’s, Omaha), The Rev. Amanda Gott (St. Matthew’s, Lincoln), The Rev. Deacon Teresa Houser (Trinity Cathedral, Omaha), The Rev. Stephen Karcher (St. Andrew’s, Omaha), The Rev.
Stephanie Swinnea (St. Luke’s, Kearney), The Rev. Katie Hargiss (St. Mark’s Pro-Cathedral, Hastings), The Rev. Steven King (Trinity Cathedral, Omaha), The Rev. Jan With (Grace Church, Columbus).

And for those who have left us in this year for new journeys of faith, we give thanks for your gracious ministry to the people of the Diocese of Nebraska and we pray for you as you travel with God.

For those preparing for Holy Orders: Keith Winton, Claire Atkins, Greg Burke and Kim Culp, that with God’s help and the communities support, they may become to us effective examples in word and action, in love and patience, and in holiness of life.

And lastly for our brothers and sisters in our companion dioceses: we give thanks for the people of The Diocese of the Dominican Republic and for Bishop Julio Holguin; and we ask God’s protection and peace for the beleaguered and dispersed people of The Diocese of Twic East in South Sudan. And we pray for all of us as we travel this day, returning to our homes and our churches; may we go forth proclaiming the Word of God in this diocese joyfully and completely. And innovatively!

And that, my friends, is a wrap!
Faithfully submitted this 21st day of October 2017 by The Reverend Susanna DesMarais, Church of the Holy Trinity, Lincoln.

Invitation to 151st Annual Council in Scottsbluff Nebraska
The Rev. Mark Selvey, of St. Francis in Scottsbluff, issued an invitation to Annual Council on October 25 – 27, 2018 held at the Gering Civic Center, in Gering Nebraska.

There being no further business to come before the 150th Annual Council of the Diocese of Nebraska it was adjourned.

Annual Council Address – 2017

My dear Brothers and Sisters and Christ –

Grace to you and peace in the name of our Lord Jesus. This morning, I want to share three stories with you that illustrate a challenge, a strength and a sign of hope in this moment of our common life. Then I want to talk a little bit about the year to come and three of the prospects before us that will invite change and growth, and I will close with a word or two of thanks.
A Challenge

Our last Annual Council was held almost exactly a year ago. You’ll remember we were at the height of a Presidential campaign season that felt different to us than any such campaign in recent memory. We seemed to be more deeply divided about the candidates before us than was usual, the debate in the public sphere seemed courser than it had been in the past, the fact that we could not see eye to eye on what was simply “factual” seemed disorienting and disappointing.

So, the election happened. And we have a new President. And thank goodness things settled down right down after that, and all that acrimony came to an end!

A couple of weeks after the election, I was at Saint Andrew’s in Omaha for my annual Sunday visit. The Bible readings for the day invited some reflection on the faithfulness of those in power and the place of the Church in the public sphere. I made my best effort to speak to the issues of the day, which included being critical of the newly elected President in some areas where his deficits are real and being critical of the people of God in the Church, where I thought we were clearly failing in our calling to be faithful disciples of Jesus.

At the end of that Sunday morning, I received a number of requests for copies of my sermon from people who said they heard exactly what they needed in that moment ... but I also received a number of comments like this one, which was scrawled on an empty Bishop’s Discretionary fund envelope that had been dropped into the collection plate. Someone had written: “I disagree with everything the Bishop says.”

Right to this very day, it remains a new and difficult challenge in our church communities, to love one another even despite our sometimes-profound differences, and to locate and inhabit some shared common ground by way of connection and action as followers of Jesus.

As we’ve journeyed together through this past year, I have come to believe that the problem — the real challenge before us — is not about the positions of any of our elected leaders or even the increasingly divisive nature of our public discourse and the segregating alga rhythms of Facebook ... the problem is that we don’t actually know very well the teachings and witness of Jesus Christ, and that absent an intimate familiarity with that Gospel, we are not only poorly equipped to judge for ourselves what is “right” and “wrong” in the political realm but we have little to bind us together as people of faith when we’re working through the challenge of loving our brothers and sisters whose background, experience, and dreams are different than our own.

I can’t think of a single issue — at least of the sort over which we’re so deeply and easily divided — that does not have a moral dimension and so is not the appropriate “business” of the Church. If we’re doing our job, we will evaluate and respond to the actions of our elected leaders and our government in church. Our shared responsibility — in this moment, is to dig much more deeply into the teachings of Jesus — and to follow him more nearly — so that with consciences informed by God’s word and our community of faith, we can take stands in public
that are consonant with what we say we believe as disciples of Jesus ... and how we promise to act, as disciples of Jesus.

For every single one of us, this will and should constitute a challenge to our partisan politics and identity as people of faith.

During Lent and Easter of 2018, our Presiding Bishop is inviting the whole Episcopal Church to participate in, “The Good Book Club.” Over those several weeks, we’ll read together the Gospel according to Luke and Luke’s story of the earliest Church as recorded in his companion Book of Acts. I am issuing an invitation right now, to the whole Diocese of Nebraska to join in that work. Let’s read the Gospel together. Let’s reacquaint ourselves with what Jesus teaches about things like serving the poor, caring for refugees, responding to violent behavior, paying taxes or disagreeing with a brother or sister in Christ.

I am certain that such a read will challenge us all, enlighten us all, and help restore a foundation of shared, real “Christian values” on which we can build in the year and years to come.

A Strength

Somewhere out there in your midst is Mother Katie Hargis, who is our brand new Pro-Cathedral Dean, and who arrived here in DioNeb just in the nick of time to join us for this Annual Council weekend. Dean Katie is actually one of three new Rectors who has recently relocated to the diocese of Nebraska and so brought to a wonderful and successful conclusion, three long and prayerful searches for new parish clergy leadership. Along with Katie, it is a great pleasure to welcome to DioNeb Mother Amanda Gott — now serving at Saint Matthew’s in Lincoln, and Mother Stephanie Swinnea — serving at Saint Luke’s in Kearney. We’re so glad you are all here.

We often say that the parish churches of the Diocese of Nebraska are “scrappy.” By that we mean that despite our modest numbers and resources, we still find ways to care for one-another meaningfully, to serve one another faithfully, and to love one another graciously. If we were to write out the scrappy formula, I think it might be: “deep care” over “faithful economizing” equals “scrappy.”

The story of Dean Katie’s recent move to Nebraska, tells this tale in a wonderful way. A search for a new church rector can cost a bunch of money — and the people of our Pro-Cathedral worked diligently during their search process to manage their expenses without compromising on doing the job right and well. Part of that was trying to imagine how to relocate the newly tapped Rector without collecting bids from big commercial moving companies and paying $10,000 for an interstate truck move. How to handle the cost of relocating Dean Katie from the Diocese of Western Kansas to the Diocese of Nebraska?

On the first Sunday in October after church, nine folks from the Pro-Cathedral drove down to Dodge City, Kansas in three pickups and with two trailers. They spent the night, and then on the next morning, they all worked together to load Dean Katie’s gear into the trucks and later in the day, to drive it all up to Hastings. When the crew of now ten got to Nebraska, they were met at the Dean’s new place by a dozen more Pro-Cathedral folks who came to help unload and get their new leader all settled in. When it turned out at the last minute that Dean Katie’s
rental was not quite ready for occupancy, our team called an audible, and quickly found garage space in which her stuff could be stored. When that work was done, dinner was provided for all the troops.

A week later, a dozen ready and willing souls showed up once again to get those garages emptied out and to get Dean Katie (finally!) settled into her new digs. At the conclusion of the move, yet another feast materialized, and all ate to their heart’s content and toasted a job well done.

Loving, caring, serving Christ in others and making a difference in the world God has entrusted to our care: this work to which we have committed ourselves does not take hundreds of people, or thousands of dollars, or extraordinary gifts of business smarts or theological acumen to be well done.

We are a strong diocese in part because we are a scrappy diocese! We are a people who find ways to use the resources we have at hand – even when they might seem modest or insufficient to meet the challenges of the moment.

“Deep care” over “faithful economizing” equals “scrappy!”

A Word of Hope

About three weeks ago, I got an email from the department of the Episcopal Church that tracks data. I get that note at about this time every year, and every year -going back since I began my ministry twenty-five years ago – it’s always a hard letter to read, presenting sobering numbers to digest.

The Episcopal Church has been in numerical decline for more than 30 years straight. We’ve lost over a quarter of our members since 1980. Here in the center of the country – where disappearing small towns have their own set of hard challenges quite apart from the challenges we face as a denomination – things are even harder. By the main statistical measure of health – average Sunday church attendance – the Diocese of Nebraska has not seen an increase in many, many years. So, when that email came, I was not surprised to read the executive summary of the report.

In 2016 – the last year for which we’ve got all the data nationally – there were fewer Episcopal Churches than there was the year before, fewer Episcopalians than there was the year before, and lower average Sunday attendance than there was the year before. With a heavy heart, I clicked to the page that detailed our church demographics here in Province 6 – the Province that makes up most of the beleaguered middle of the country. As expected, when I scanned the average Sunday attendance column for the province, things looked pretty grim. As I looked down the columns, it was one sad statistic after another: declines from 3% to 5% and more. Wyoming was a bright spot in the Province, showing 0.8% growth ... a little less than 1%.

And then there was Nebraska. Nebraska. With our little community of 53 churches, about 2/3 of which are in those tiny Midwestern towns and fully half of which worship fewer than 25 people on a Sunday morning. Let me tell you what the report said about us: from 2015 to 2016,
the average Sunday attendance in the diocese of Nebraska increased by 3.5%. Which makes us – at least in the last year for which we have data from the home office – the seventh fastest-growing diocese in the whole Episcopal Church.

Now let’s not lose our heads. Being one of the fastest growing dioceses in the Episcopal Church is like being one of the tallest skyscrapers in Topeka ...

And average Sunday attendance is not the only measure of growth and success in the church landscape.

But I do take that measure as a sign that we are on the right track together. And I want you all to know that every single one of you plays a part in that success. The five churches across the state that are adding members to their rolls in double digits every year are leading the way, but there are in fact 24 parishes in Nebraska whose Sunday attendance rose by at least one person in that latest report.

We can celebrate, and learn from, all those communities, both east and west, rural and urban for the modest growth they’re experiencing. And we can celebrate all of you too:

– Because every time one of you crawls out of your warm bed on a cold December Sunday because you need Communion ...

– Every time one of you shows up on our Sabbath day because you care about your brothers and sisters in Christ who are your church family ...

– Every time one of you pops into some sister church in some other town when you are visiting friends or relatives elsewhere in the state ...

And most of all, every time one of you invites a friend to come see what it is about your church community that keeps you coming back, week after week and year after year, you contribute to building up the body of Christ, and being part of a diocese that is suddenly, wonderfully, showing our Episcopal Church that by the power of the Holy Spirit there is always hope, even out here middle America!

Now – a couple of exciting things to share about the year to come.

2018 is the 150th anniversary of the Diocese of Nebraska. We’ll be celebrating that sesquicentennial over the course of the entire year, kicking off that celebration on the first weekend in January when our Presiding Bishop will visit Nebraska on a Saturday night to lead us in worship and conversation about this moment in our Church and our calling as members of the Jesus Movement.

On the next day, we’ll officially begin our anniversary year by lifting our voices in common prayer across the diocese, worshipping on that Sunday morning with prayers and song specially written for the day, for the year, and for Nebraska! In fact, tonight you will be part of the world premiere of one of those pieces, as we’ll sing together at our Festival Eucharist a hymn composed to celebrate our 150th by Nebraska hymn writer (and Bishop’s Cross recipient!) Rae Whitney.
Later on in this council, Noelle Ptomey – who is graciously and capably leading the charge as chair of our sesquicentennial committee – will tell you a little bit more about all we have in store for our 150th.

During tomorrow’s council business session, you will have the chance to consider legislation designed to simplify the governance of our diocese.

This is the culmination of better than three years of work, as your diocesan leadership – including especially the members of your Bishop & Trustees and your Executive Commission – have met jointly, examined the governance structures of other dioceses, studied the needs of DioNeb in the moment and prayed sincerely to know the will of the Spirit. I am very grateful to the many people who’ve engaged this work over these past few years, and I want to acknowledge a special debt of gratitude to the Reverend Marisa Thompson and our Chancellor Woody Bradford, who took up the challenge of leading much of this work and conversation on behalf of us all.

I want you all to know that I am in favor of passing the legislation we’ll see later on at council, and so simplifying our governance structures. It’s my belief that our present organization as a diocese has too many moving parts – and requires too many people – to do the relatively straightforward work of managing our financial resources and sharing in the task of visioning and implementing our diocesan ministries.

If we can do what we need to do with half as many people at the table, that will liberate a bunch of talented, passionate and faithful folks to engage in the critical work of serving Jesus in local parishes, or in diocesan ministries that are more directly related to serving the poor, healing the sick, spreading the Gospel and building the Church. If you’ve not already done so, take a look at that legislation which is included in your registration packet, get talking with the folks at your table, and let’s see if we can’t figure a way to make a change that’s been a long time coming.

It’s been awhile – better than twenty years in fact – since the diocese has led an effort to plant a new church community.

The prospect of engaging that possibility is especially exciting in this moment when so many new and creative incarnations of “church” are being planted and tested all over the US, and not just in our Episcopal Church, but in all the variety of denominations and non-denominations that make up the larger body of Christ. I’m pleased to announce that the diocese of Nebraska has been awarded a grant by the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society (that’s the fancy name for The Episcopal Church!) to help us study and pray about the prospect of establishing a new church in DioNeb, work which we will commence before the end of the 2017 calendar year.

It’s a good bet that a church for the new millennium won’t look much like a church of 10, 25 or 50 years ago. Though it’s possible we’ll discern a need to erect a new building with stained glass windows and a steeple – and call a full-time priest to help fill the pews – ‘church plants” in 2017 often sport a very different look. What is certain is that the Church we start after praying,
studying and dreaming together, will be a church that is representative of the kind of faith and values that already distinguish this diocese and the wonderful people who live and serve here.

It’s a sure thing that it will take some time to pray and study our way into discerning the Spirit’s call around starting a new Nebraska church – and we will surely need the support of any number of you who are excited about the prospect of building some new, relevant and faithful version of a church for the 21st century. Stay tuned. And by all means, start praying for this work even now!

Before I move to closing and some words of thanks, I want to tell you about one more locus of the Spirit’s movement – and of hope for the deepest kind of growth – that now lays before us.

Hard to believe that it was only one year ago that Brother James came to our Diocese of Nebraska from New York, via South Africa. Most of you met him for the very first time at last year’s council, and though he quickly won us all over with his love of Christ, his love of life, and his passion for teaching us about prayer and service, even so, I know that there was some head scratching going on. *What do we need with a monk?*

Now twelve months on, and – I don’t know – probably 30,000 miles later – I think we all agree that we’re blessed beyond measure by the presence of our beloved brother James in this place.

And so, it’s with particular delight that I can share the news that Brother James has discerned a call to make his home with us here in Nebraska for the foreseeable future and to help lead us in building a brand-new ministry of prayer, service, and formation.

We’re even now pulling together the pieces of what we’re calling the Benedictine Service Corps. The vision for this ministry is to invite young adults – both women and men – to come live with us for a season here in the Diocese of Nebraska, in a community structured after the fashion of Saint Benedict and in the tradition of the ancient monastic ministries of the Church.

We’ll be looking for people who have a sense of calling around deep prayer, care for the poor and for creation, and community living ... not necessarily monastics, but rather people who are called to live in an intentional Christian community for just a year or two. Picture 3 or 5 folks to start: praying together daily, eating meals in common, sharing expenses and all serving in churches and local ministries of care and service to those on the margins. We hope to plant this community in urban Omaha to begin, and we will build it with the intention of serving in – and expanding to – greater Nebraska in the months and years to come, ultimately making the Benedictine Service Corps a ministry with a commitment to the entire Diocese of Nebraska.

By all means, grab Brother James here at council if this vision of a community of prayer and service appeals to you. We’ll need folks with talent and passion in everything from plumbing and painting to preaching and praying to make this thing happen ...

And at this time, we most especially need to connect with people who will help us in recruiting the first members of this new community.

I wish to close this morning by saying thanks.
Thanks first to the wonderful people with whom I work every day and who minister with such passion on your behalf.

I just mentioned Brother James and all that he’s given of himself to the people of this diocese. I am sure we’re a more deeply prayerful staff – and that I am a more seriously prayerful bishop – because of his witness, support, and friendship. You, my brother, have my great admiration and gratitude.

Though her position is entirely a volunteer one, Archdeacon Betsy Bennett comes into the office every week to participate in our Tuesday morning staff meetings and help support the wider ministries of DioNeb. She’s been a tireless advocate for those living on the edge – and for the care of creation we’re called to as followers of Jesus. She is a wonderful contributor to this community.

Lindsey Rowe has served as our Diocesan Administrator since April of 2014, and in that role has managed everything from the day-to-day operations of the diocesan office, to bishop’s annual visitation schedule, to meeting and event planning – including pulling together this and each year’s Annual Council. Many of you will have read the news we shared last week, that Lindsey has submitted her resignation and will be moving on to a tremendous opportunity as the Executive Assistant to the Executive Director of Immanuel Health Systems Pathway’s, Program in Omaha. Know that Lindsey has lead with her deep affection for all of you as a life-long Nebraska Episcopalian whose love for the churches and the people of this diocese is unmatched. We will miss that devotion ... and her unflappable calm in the face of the many minor crises that punctuate diocesan ministry. Thank you, Lindsey. You will be missed.

As you know, Beth Byrne manages the finances of our diocese. She does that work with the perfect balance of uncompromising attention to the details of our numbers and a deep faith in the Spirit’s guidance over all that we do. You’ll get to hear her do her thing at length, later on in this council. Beth has also adapted with superior grace to a job description that has changed and grown substantially over the course of her seven years of service. Whether it’s in her role as Comptroller, Property Manager, Investment Advisor or Financial Secretary, we are entirely reliant on Beth’s skills and hard work to be faithful stewards of the gifts of money and property that God has entrusted to our care. I am so grateful for her service.

Father Phil Chapman died recently and will be terribly missed by us all. One of many things Father Phil taught me – this was in the signature line of every email he ever sent – was to “travel in pairs and worship in groups.” That notion of “traveling in pairs” comes from the Gospel of Luke, in which is told the story of the first time Jesus “sends out” his followers to do his ministry in the wider world. Jesus commissions the disciples in pairs ... he bids them “travel light” ... he tells them not to stay in any one place for too long, but rather, to keep on moving.

I am so blessed – we are so blessed – that Canon Liz Easton read that part of Luke’s Gospel and has been willing to ride alongside me for three and a half years now. I hope our partnership is seen as a model for how to be a joyful and effective disciple of Jesus in this time and place for that is our shared intention. And I can tell you that I am a much better bishop – and Nebraska is
a much stronger diocese – for the hard work and faithfulness of our Canon, with whom it is my
great privilege and blessing to share in the leadership of the Church.

In addition to the folks on your diocesan staff, and as a close to this over-long reflection – I
need to thank ALL of you.

I want to express my deepest appreciation to the clergy leaders of this diocese – priests and
deacons both active and retired – who have chosen to make this place your home. I’ve lived
and worked in four different dioceses as an adult, and nowhere – no place else – compares to
Nebraska for the sincerity, the determination, the faithfulness and the tireless work offered by
our college of clergy. You are the finest women and men I have ever worked with, and it is such
a blessing to serve with you.

And finally, my brothers and sisters, thanks to all the rest of you – the lay leaders of this
Episcopal Diocese of Nebraska gathered here this morning – and to the thousands of your
fellow Episcopalians who you have been elected and appointed to represent at this Annual
Council. I am daily inspired by all that you give, and all that you do, to build up the kingdom of
God, to make Jesus known in the communities in which God has planted you and to be the
Church.

This is my 7th Annual Council as your bishop, and I am as excited and proud to be here with you
as I was at my first Annual Council (here in North Platte!) six years ago. It is the great blessing
of my life to have been able to come home and to serve in this place that I know and love best
in the whole wide world. I cannot think of anyplace else that I would rather be. It is no
exaggeration to say that every day in this job is full of wonder and joy, and I am so hopeful
about the future to which God beckons us as the Episcopal Church in Nebraska.

Submitted this 20th day of October in the Year of our Lord 2017,
In North Platte

+ The Right Revered Joseph Scott Barker
Eleventh Bishop of Nebraska