

The 146th Annual Synod of the Diocese of Springfield

October 21-22, 2023

Address - The Right Reverend Brian K. Burgess, XII Springfield

In the Name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. *Amen.*

When my now 27 year-old daughter was still in high school, we traveled to England. As we were leaving London, our hosts arranged for a lunch at the Oxford Cambridge Club not far from central London. We understood the honor of the invitation and so we dressed for the occasion.

While seated at table in my clerical collar and black suit, I became fixated on the very large oil paintings adorning the walls that reached toward the vaulted ceilings. They were portraits of historical figures of the realm that were alumni of either Oxford or Cambridge Universities. In particular was the 10' portrait of Nicholas Brady, the Anglican Divine and poet who graduated from Christ Church, Oxford and was the grandson of Hugh Brady, the first Bishop Meath. He is best known throughout the Church as having teamed up with Nahum Tate, the Anglo-Irish poet for what is still known as the 1696 Tate and Brady Psalter.

This translation of the Psalter was written in such a way that it clearly defined the English church choral music tradition as it fit so neatly over the vulgate, the known Latin text, giving Anglicanism its unique sound, phrasing and cadence. Today, many of the major choral music programs of English collegiate chapels and diocesan cathedrals still defer to the Tate and Brady Psalter when singing the Daily Offices or Eucharistic settings. As a comparison, Nahum Tate also wrote the well-known Christmas carol, "While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks by Night." What that carol did for Christmas, the Tate and Brady Psalter did for Anglican liturgy.

Three separate times I tried to interject this topic in our discussion at our lunch table. Three separate times I was ignored. I even remember turning to my daughter and asking if I was broaching a subject that sounded controversial or even offensive to some. She said, "I think not." (She grew up on the Tate and Brady Psalter as well, and so she speaks in that manner.)

It was not until we reached home and a few months had passed that I was told by a Brit here in the States how those of the Oxford Cambridge Club never venture into conversations about portraits hanging on the wall or the weather; as inviting such level of small-talk is beneath their position, their peerage, their education and their understanding of world history and events and so both are considered a huge waste of their time.

I thought of that lesson (abruptly) learned as I was preparing to be with you and deliver my annual Synod address today. Preach, teach and share only what is edifying; only what is deserving of the time, attention and financial concern of this Diocese. Honor their commitment to the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Be that Bishop who recognizes her history, her lineage, her peerage and the manner in which she sacrifices much for the kingdom of God. In other words, don't venture into talking about the weather or portraits on the wall. Its beneath them as heirs of Christ's eternal kingdom. It is beneath them as the people of God.

(Pause): I am an extremely blessed Bishop of the Church. The manner in which you embrace the mission as well as the ways and means of the church is humbling to behold. There is not a day that we enter into that I can't wait to engage you as you engage the kingdom of God that has come, is here, and will come

again. The Diocesan staff has heard me say quite a few times, "There is no better diocese in which to be a Bishop or be about the presence and ministry of Christ than the Diocese of Springfield." Do we have challenges? Absolutely! Many challenges! However, those challenges are particular to this family; those who gather at our table in the presence of our Father. Many of those challenges may be compared to witnessing a child develop a fever. You want them well, and so you respond proportionally, based on your understanding of things, and for all the right reasons. Thank you for your patience with me as at times there are many needs that are being addressed, but they are being addressed by this family and within this house.

As I spent this last year traveling throughout the Diocese of Springfield and being with every parish, mission, chapel or chaplaincy at least once, it became evident to me how blessed we are and how humble I must remain in your presence. There is tremendous ministry going on in some of the most beautiful communities and under quite challenging circumstances. The priests, deacons and lay leaders of this Diocese are taking risks that defy conventional wisdom but that communicate a bending of world history toward salvation unto life eternal, and in the near presence of Jesus Christ, our risen and ascended Lord and Savior.

I find on the whole churches are well-maintained, orderly and inviting. Services are regular, reverent and appropriate to the mood of our liturgical Calendar. There is at once a patience, a respect and a joy in each offering that is rarely found throughout our church or Communion. There is a healthy thirst for sacramental grace that comes forward without demand or expectation that human agency or ideology preside. The Book of Common Prayer is enough, the Hymnal 1982 is enough, the Holy Word of God is enough and the Diocese of Springfield is enough to usher in the kingdom of God come now, do you believe this?

I also find that over the decades, and with no ill intent, we have become insular in our offerings. We have become an "inside church" and that is not healthy for the people nor the communities we serve. Since the advent of indoor air-conditioning, we have closed the windows and doors to our historic parishes and churches that were placed strategically within communities by our ancestors in interest of waking the dead. To literally make dead people alive. Don't only imagine but be that church that opens her windows and allows the sound of robust Hymn tunes to meander down the street. Why would any of us want to be timid? We either have the very real presence of Christ in Word and sacraments or we do not.

Sharing again from a place of awe and reverence, it is time to turn off the cameras. Holy Mystery, the calling down of God the Holy Spirit, is an intimate act of transcendence. Once cameras are turned on worship stops and a performance begins. We are also realizing the negative benefits of sacramental voyeurism, of becoming insular and isolated one from another but still demanding that our most intimate needs are met.

In his article, "The Battle for the Body," Carl Trueman acknowledges that, "The war against the body lies at the heart of so much of our modern politics." He identifies one of the "unhelpful" norms left in the wake of Covid-19 as being how we now "think of other people's bodies as a source of danger and even death." He goes on to say that, "We need the presence of others bodies because we crave the presence of other people." Perhaps our isolation one from another is why we all encounter such a lack of shared direction and the rise of loneliness which has manifested itself as heightened degrees of mental distress and mental illness, including depression, anxiety, and increased deaths caused by drug overdoses, alcoholism, and suicide. Do you realize the leading cause of death today in America for men

under the age of 45 is suicide and the second cause is fentanyl overdose? *O God, make speed to save us. O Lord, make haste to help us.* In the mean time, reaching out to men under the priority of authentically men's ministries is now warranted like never before.

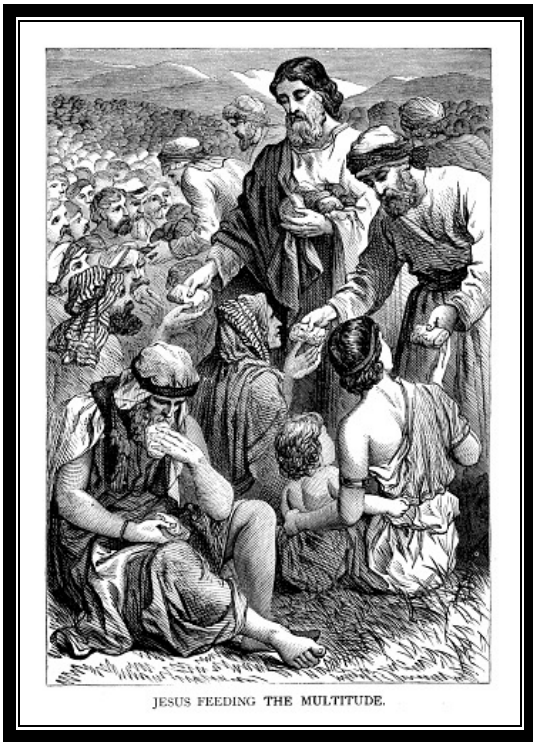
We gather as the Body of Christ. Carl Trueman continues his article by pointing to the Word of God, both read in community and preached, and how that expression of the Church is central to our understanding of God's saving presence. However, that alone does not suffice, especially in an era when sermons can be downloaded and entirely detached from the physical presence of other bodies. His argument is that the Holy Eucharist is the act of our Incarnate God. To that end, "the sacraments are (to be) given a central place in our public church services." He concludes, "If the battle for the status of the body is as much a battle for the imagination as it is for doctrine, then those physical dimensions of worship - the water, the bread, the wine - need to have their proper place." Water has its feel against our skin as well as a sound when being poured, bread has an aroma as well as a taste, wine has its awakening of the palate as well as its appeal to the soul. Please do not take any of this from our experiencing the Word of God.

Be that community of the resurrection that has doors standing wide-open and then processes from the side-door of the parish hall to the principle door as a demonstration of being on exodus together and how it is the people of God enter in. The procession is a bit short? Vest children appropriately to carry sacred items to the altar of God as it is their ministry to do heavy lifting and to serve. Why would any child aspire to serve if they don't witness their siblings and peers ahead of them being so necessary? Why would any child come forward to engage what has over-time become the ministry of 50 year olds? No children? I'm sorry, but that rests entirely on us.

Linger after the service outside on the front sidewalk or within the courtyard as the means of demonstrating Christian hospitality. This Mother's Day plan on offering a coffee service and danish outside. Invite the women and girls to wear beautiful spring hats. If you take a picture on your smart phone and send it to me, I will send \$5.00 to the women's shelter of Springfield for every spring hat worn on Mother's Day. "Mommy, what are they doing?" is the question from the 8 year-old as they drive past your church on their way to some pagen event. This is how you get those who are thirsty to realize how it is they are actually drinking the sand.

There is no doubt that all Christian denominations and all institutions that we once revered, respected and depended upon in ages past as being foundational to our existence are no longer there in the expected manner they once were. The Episcopal Church is no exception. According to combined parochial reports turned in by dioceses in 2022, and compared against those same statistics from 1980, we have dropped by 76% in Baptisms, and 86% in marriages. We no longer bury the dead as we once had the privilege of doing on behalf of a largely Christian populace. Compared to 1980, we have dropped 52% in Christian Burials and not because people are no longer dying. Within this age of consumerism, people now have many options, which have no expectations of presenting ourselves, our souls and bodies to be a Holy and reasonable sacrifice unto God. There is no longer the societal expectation of appearing within the courts of our Lord.

It's no different for our brothers and sisters in Rome. Mass attendance for Roman Catholics who attend Mass each Sunday is just 17% of those who are Baptized. And a recent Gallup poll reveals for the first-time that a majority of Americans - 51% - no longer identify as religious. I remember 1980. Numerically, we were in a tail-spin back then as well, wondering where it was the 1960's went. As I have preached from pulpits throughout this Diocese, the 1960s are not returning. Jesus Christ is.



What are we to do? Ask the disciples having had their fill of loaves and fishes with the 5000, witnessing Jesus walking on water and then having benefit of his Bread of life discourse:

When they found him on the other side of the lake, they asked him, "Rabbi when did you get here?" Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On him God the Father has placed his seal of approval."

Then they asked him, "what must we do to do the works God requires?"

Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent." That's it. Is the Christ the Bread of Life or is he not? If you believe in Him, then we must worship Him.

Beloved of Christ, they are building monstrous, gargantuan distribution centers for Amazon in our Diocese. Add to that how sport facilities that would rival those of NCAA universities are commanding more and more real estate in even our most disadvantaged communities. Just about anything our heart desires can be ordered and delivered within hours of our discerning that physical need. And yet, places like Sherman, Chatham, Jerseyville, Williamsville and Pana go without the sacramental life of the Church as entrusted to us.

What are we to do? Be faithful, true and bold. Be courageous in your faith in Jesus Christ. As introduced last year, we have entered into a relationship with Church Army USA, that historical reach of evangelism that is unique to our tradition having been founded after World War I in the Church of England and gifted to us by them. Officers of the Church Army have been to our Diocese twice. They have met with and inspected our historic footprint both in Granite City and Rantoul. They are excited by the needs and opportunities that present themselves to us in those places.

Do you realize that only a few hundred yards from St. Christopher's in Rantoul is a public elementary school that is designated as an English as a Second Language school for that community? Do you realize that many families new to our country are being sent to Rantoul for placement within HUD housing left available upon the decommissioning of Chanute Air Force Base in that area? We believe, along with the Church Army, that the Church is needed now more than ever.

Do you realize the important placement of St. Bartholomew's in Granite City and the traffic pattern that walks and drives past that church and her parking lot daily? Have you experienced the asphyxiating poverty and related substance abuse problem in this community who is fighting to come back? We believe that a math tutoring lab for school children ages third through ninth grade would work quite nicely. An after school math academy where students can get the help they need while the equations are still recognizable to us and to all men. Add to that an industrial grade Laundromat downstairs so that the parents of those students being tutored can accomplish great things as well. We envision 25 cents a load and 10 cents for the dryer. Why not? If not us, then who? If not now, then when?

The Church Army has sent a contractor/evangelist from Missouri to inspect these sites and to report to Diocesan Council what it would take to upgrade these buildings in interest of inviting such important, well-defined, long-term ministries of outreach. As you can tell, we are going to give these priorities our very best and fullest attention. Do we have the money? Absolutely! The only challenge is that the money is largely in your pockets. Seriously, we will be inviting support of these mission priorities in due time. First, we define clearly what it is we will offer and then take a forensic look at our investment funds to ascertain what may be designated from earnings based on your history of faithful giving.

Imagine in both locations churches filled to capacity for a weeknight advancement ceremony complete with beautiful prayers and Hymns of thanksgiving. Imagine a Wednesday evening Baptism with fellow classmates present as the means of making good their vows unto the Most High and making promises for and with their friend. Once we see the vision, if it is to the glory of God, we can achieve it. We will need the prayer and labors and financial support of our stronger parishes and missions to get to this intended destination.

Can you give a weekend to paint interior walls or cut back bushes so that beautiful stained glass can be seen with the interior lights on? Can we spend one evening arranging classrooms so that they appear inviting and safe to those whose primary language is not English? Please start to have the discussion now as to what strong, able-bodied Christians with a heart for evangelism can do. If we end each volunteer offering with Evening Prayer or Holy Eucharist within those sacred places and a shared meal, this Diocese is strengthened and God and the people of God win.

None of this would be possible without the support and leadership of our Diocesan clergy. Specifically, our retired clergy. Rather than enjoy a well-deserved retirement that is void of many cares of parish ministry, the retired clergy of Springfield are largely to be found before altars on behalf of the people Christ came to redeem. Without them, institutional chaos would reign. We are the beneficiaries of a great deal of holy order because retired and semi-retired clergy say “yes” to our expressed needs.

The answer from this point forward is strong and healthy congregations. Why? Because strong and healthy lay-leaders, deacons and priests are raised up by strong and healthy congregations. It is no accident that vocations drop significantly as Average Sunday Attendance drops. It is no accident that our brightest and best do not want to enter vocational education and formation when the church is offering part-time at best.

As held up before us last year, I believe the vocational diaconate is going to turn the nose of this battle ship around the desired directional buoy. Priests are still essential, however, we need muscle, stamina and a thirst for mission that takes us out of our doors and into the communities in which we are called to serve. That is the vocational ministry of deacons. The customary for vocational deacons is now ready, and it invites the brightest, the best, the able-bodied and the highly motivated to win the day and our communities for Christ. I was shocked to learn recently that only 6% of our active clergy (priests and deacons) are below the age of 34 and that there are only 7 vocational deacons in the Episcopal Church under the age of 50. Most deacons serving today were born either in the 1950's or 1960's. While we are at it, based on the numbers provided by our own Deployment Officers, in the face of 296 clergy openings, 31 clergy are actively searching for positions.

Why? Because among other things clerics at the threshold of their next step vocationally are not moving their family out of a home where the mortgage is below 3% annually to a home where the mortgage rate is 7% or higher. The benefits of church owned property is once again a tremendous benefit. If we are

serious about attracting and calling the best, we now need to consider the housing market and be creative in relocating and settling clergy. We did not create this situation but we must respond to it. Consider the benefit of having those who constitute our search committees bring forward a proposal to their Vestry in interest of a rectory. It is one viable option in such a volatile housing market.

Your Bishop can no longer reach into his files and pull forth three or four names for parishes and missions to consider. In addition, I will not approve the call of the cleric who was the only candidate considered. That is giving the final decision to the search committee, not Vestry. It has proved over and over again to be disastrous in the long-term pastoral relationship as there really was no priority considered outside of desperation. The call belongs to Vestry and they must be prepared to move forward with another candidate if the desired candidate withdraws during the negotiation process (which happens quite frequently). The pool of qualified candidates for open positions is just not there. It is time for us to set the bar even higher when it comes to raising up, advancing and attracting clergy. Again, the vocational diaconate is an expression of the Church catholic that has been underutilized and is now needed.

The vocational discernment process is now open in Springfield again. After spending a year defining with great precision the ways and means of discerning the vocational diaconate to the point of producing a customary, I was informed last week that Lincoln Christian University in Lincoln has announced that it will cease to operate as of the end of this academic year. Their on-line contribution was 3/5s of the education requirements outlined in the customary, ensuring we remained in full compliance with all canonical expectations while moving candidates toward ordination within two years. Ten years ago, who would have thought that regional malls, colleges and universities and long ensconced institutions such as community banks would be closing. Thank you for your patience. We are designing this plane as we fly it, and I am well aware that there are souls on board.

Please allow me this opportunity to thank you for providing me with such a dedicated and capable staff. A great deal of my joy is found being able to work so closely with Canon Mark Evans, Erin Anglin, Zach Buscher and Gerry Smith. They are dedicated, professional and have a love for this Diocese that is contagious. By the standards of even a cursory review of diocesan websites throughout the Episcopal Church, I believe we are the diocese with the least amount of professional staff supporting the priorities of their Bishop. However, I would hold up for our inspection today how it is they are the most dedicated and professional to be found anywhere. We have a very strong but short bench. We do not have separate canons: one for administration and one for deployment. We do not have a full-time position that maintains concern for health benefits and other human resource needs; and we do not have congregational developers, CFOs or even bookkeepers. All of the above and much, much more is accomplished by three, hard-working, dedicated and sacrificial people and a equally dedicated volunteer Treasurer.

Please thank them for the amount of work they accomplish on our behalf. The move to offering a Consumer Directed Health Plan (CDHP) in addition to the regular PPOs is a direct testimony to the Diocesan staff remaining faithful stewards of the resources given to us for the mission of the Church. It would have been a great deal easier to just pay the bill and expect that an increase in our assessments be forthcoming.

And I would be remiss if I did not thank our Diocesan Chancellor. No one really wants to call their lawyer because we are all innately aware of how valuable and costly their time is. Chancellor Babb has been available not just for canonical concerns but for the concerns of a Bishop trying to gain his sea legs

underneath him. At all times this man is professional, thorough, patient, respectful, and merciful. Matters of great concern have been and are being handled in not only the appropriate manner, but in ways that bring glory to God while emboldening His Church.

We can all smell the fear in the air. As other dioceses are taking measures to merge and close chapters on what was once a glorious and exciting time to be Episcopalian, I believe that our better days are out ahead of us. Do you want to attract and retain the very best clergy of the church? Then present yourself before altars twice as much as you do now. Have an expectation that the Nave is full each and every time the lights are on. Not convenient? I don't believe the Church Calendar was put together for our convenience but to the glory of God. Holidays made it onto our secular calendars because they were literally Holy Days. I have a poster that I need to get framed for my office. It reads, "Amish Market - Closed on Ascension Day." The Amish! We begin with our own families; our own children and our own grandchildren. Too sensitive a subject? Why is that? Are they not the ones we most want to spend all of eternity with in the nearer presence of our risen and ascended Lord?

If you have the expectation that the clergy bring their A game to church each and every Sunday then they will. If you expect them to bring it on Monday through Friday, they will. Articulate expectations that are worthy of your full participation and then fund those expectations and support those expectations with your consecrated presence. Insist on a weekly adult forum where program and education are presented in a well-planned and inviting way.

Standing around with styrofoam coffee-cups in our hands talking about the weather, portraits on the wall or days long-past is beneath the peerage of the Church. It is beneath those for whom Christ died an agonizing death in order that he may redeem us from the strangle hold of sin and death. Under full obedience to God our Father, He literally exchanged his life for our lives. Do you want a choral music program that tours English cathedrals during the summer months? Do you want to take young people into the mountains and hills of Appalachia for mission excursions each summer? Articulate, invite and fund it! Who told you that you are not worthy? Who told you that your God needs to yield to the priorities of lesser gods? You hold great expectations in your personal lives as well as your professional lives. Please have the same great expectations of your Church.

Last year, we introduced the concept of starting Communities of Episcopal Fellowship within populated areas of our Diocese where they have not the presence of an Episcopal Church. The community of Effingham has done just that and is continuing to flex its evangelical muscle by meeting two Wednesdays a month at the Chapel of the Cross in Effingham. Led by Fr. Michael Clark and postulant Danny Shuler, this gathering realizes communicants of all ages and backgrounds during weeknight gathering that include meeting for a meal and an evening of bowling and they even anticipate a Baptism soon. Thank you Fr. Clark, Danny Shuler and all who thirst for righteousness in Effingham.

St. James' Chapel in Marion is due for a facelift of the vicarage. This chapel is stunningly beautiful and equipped for all sacred purposes, with a house next door. As many of you know, Marion is the fastest growing area in all of Illinois having outpaced Carbondale in light industry and industry of hospitality. I say we use what we already own, make it stronger, have great expectations of it, and watch as the Christ of God has his way with us.

The episcopal residence in Petersburg has hosted three dinners incorporating worship, fellowship and a meal. Please join us in opening doors where it is the Church needs to be. Planting seeds does not take away needed resources from existing churches. In fact, it is usually the impetus for church growth

within our already established parishes and missions. It is as easy as potluck supper or a few pans of lasagna. Start an electronic mailing list and invite those you want to spend all of eternity with to such things as a game night, an ice cream social or a simple back-yard fire pit. What about an open garage gathering around hot apple cider and cinnamon donuts. Offer prayer, sing a Hymn and speak well of your church (do you realize how good our Hymns sound sung *a cappella* in an open garage? Almost as good as singing them in the shower.) Invite those who seek fellowship with Christ to dream the dreams of God and then invite them to sit together on Sunday in the parish or mission near you.

One of many reasons why it is I stand before you as your Bishop today is because a Korean War veteran took an interest in me during a parish-wide cookout. He asked my help in taking a propane burner, heated a vat of rosin to the point of boiling and then he showed me how to make rosin baked potatoes. To an eight-year-old, it was the coolest thing I had ever seen. You are already all that you need to be when it comes to being evangelists. I promise that I will warn you if you are becoming too bold in your expression of evangelism.

I invite you to join me in revisiting the Godly expectation that we safeguard those entrusted to us, especially our children. There are clearly defined expectations handed to us by the General Convention office of the Episcopal Church and by Church Insurance, the organization that holds the liability for our actions and inactions. Following the long and faithful service of Canon Gene Stormer, a Licensed Clinical Social Worker, Fr. David Knox has agreed to step into the role of safeguarding administrator on our behalf. He will communicate expected standards and training in a concise and inviting manner.

The expected training is a lot better and a great deal easier to access now that we all have become quite proficient in on-line education. Fr. Knox, a medical doctor and pediatrician, will communicate expectations, define avenues for compliance, and invite us into the proper means of recording our participation. As I shared with Fr. Knox, there is no need to make this more difficult than it is. Help me incentivise this reach toward a healthy and safer Diocese where all are protected and cherished.

Safeguarding has always been clearly articulated as an expectation of this church. Many of you filling this room today remember with me when we charged our priests with such an expectation at the time of their Ordinations. Within the Ordinal, rather than be subjected to a sermon extolling how *wonderful* a person the candidate is and how *lucky we are* to have them as our priest, the people would be seated and the Bishop would read this charge:

Have always therefore printed in your remembrance, how great a treasure is committed to your charge. For they are the sheep of Christ, which he bought with his death, and for whom he shed his blood. The Church and Congregation whom you must serve, is his Spouse, and his Body. And if it shall happen that the same Church, or any Member thereof, do take any hurt or hindrance by reason of your negligence, ye know the greatness of the fault, and also the horrible punishment that will ensue. Wherefore consider with yourselves the end of the Ministry towards the children of God, towards the Spouse and Body of Christ; and see that ye never cease your labour, your care and diligence, until ye have done all that lieth in you, according to your bounden duty, to bring all such as are or shall be committed to your charge, unto that agreement in the faith and knowledge of God, and to that ripeness and perfectness of age in Christ, that there be no place left among you, either for error in religion, or for viciousness in life.

(1928 Book of Common Prayer, pg. 540)

That is only one of five quite long and often uncomfortable paragraphs read aloud in sacred space before sacred people; expectations that bishops of the Church once held-up as non-negotiable.



The point of Jesus walking on water is not that he could, he is the Son of God after all. The point of the gospel is that we are made in the image and likeness of God *and we do not*. We are the tradition that evangelized entire continents with a Bible, a few prayer books, bottles of tonic water and well trained clergy in pith helmets. We once sang Hymns in the African bush and now those bishops seek to come here and evangelize us. I am traveling to our Companion Diocese of Tabora in Tanzania this coming June. Actually, I am needed to be there because when Bishop Elias Chakupewa shows-up before their altars, there are hundreds awaiting his apostolic reach for the sacrament of Confirmation. He says, "Bishop, I need your help." Perhaps the dis-ease is a western epidemic. What should we isolate ourselves from and what should we expose ourselves to in order to have life and have it more abundantly?

Ask the hard questions, be patient with one another, forgive and forget, be present, be bold, be courageous, be generous, be humble as this vocation and ministry is impossible to accomplish on our own, which is the point. Know that there is already a great cloud of witnesses encouraging us in this race that is set before us (Hebrews 12:1-2); encouraging us to lay aside every weight of sin as not to tire, not to quit, not to lose hope, not to remove ourselves from the challenges, not to overexert ourselves to the point of exhaustion, rendering us not being able to finish.

Compared to the small but faithful Anglican community that once met in Kiev, now spread throughout Europe, meeting on-line; the Anglican Diocese of Jerusalem now hiding in safe rooms; or even the 100 to 200 Anglican and Roman Catholic Christians scattered throughout Somalia, and assigned to the Diocese of Egypt because their identification would place a death sentence over their heads; our challenges pale in comparison. However, our Commission remains the same: "Go!" Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything Christ has commanded us (Matthew 28:19-20).

If the flooring around the font in your church is not moist, we need to ask ourselves, "Why?" And please do not put this on our children or offer the defense that we don't have time. We have time for what it is we love, honor and adore; *in response* to who it is that loved us first. We have the Gospel - the Good News of God with us. Salvation is as near as our altars.

Within my last parish, I would insist that a particular Hymn was always sung during our *Ceremony of Lessons and Carols* during the third week of Advent. It was sung after St. Luke's account of the Annunciation. Off the record, I also would assign the reading of the Annunciation to the Roman Catholic priest that would be with us that evening as I believe it takes a catholic heart to understand all that happens when we are told that "the angel departed from her;" leaving the Mother of God alone in this world with her decision of complete obedience.

The Hymn is 475: *God Himself is with us*. Why this Hymn during an Advent service of Lessons and Carols? Because of its final stanza written by German poet and mystic Gerhardt Tersteegen in the mid

18th Century, a hundred years before the American Civil War. Although born into the family of a wealthy merchant, he would hardly be considered a nobleman, except in the eyes of God and His Church.

That verse reads:

Come abide within me;
let my soul, like Mary
be thine earthly sanctuary.

Come, indwelling Spirit,
with transfiguring splendor;
love and honor will I render.

Where I go here below,
let me bow before thee,
know thee, and adore thee.



Being the Anglican presence in central and southern Illinois is how we stand before God, know Him and adore Him.

It is an everlasting honor to be your Bishop. I will spend the rest of my natural life and probably even the supernatural life to come working and interceding on your behalf. Being specific, and taking directly from the Tate and Brady Psalter, my prayer is this:

Turn thee again, thou God of hosts, look down from heaven, *
behold, and visit this vine;

(Preserve what) thy right hand hath planted, *
and the branch that thou madest so strong for thyself. (Psalm 80:14)

Or, because we are accustomed in this Diocese to listening for a still, small voice; I now end *and look forward* toward a very bright future with words that speak volumes to us and to us alone; and have become (from Morton to Cairo; and from the Missouri River to the Ohio River) our common prayer:

Lord, bring us now success. (Psalm 118:25)



The Right Reverend Brian K. Burgess, DD
XII Springfield