

In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.  
Amen!

Beginnings are so often significant in our lives and experiences. They are catalysts for growth, change and transformation. They mark the inception of new journeys, whether they are personal, professional, or collective. A beginning can lay the foundation for the future. And with every journey the first steps we take, the choices we make, the risks we accept and the relationships we forge at the outset— all these, have lasting implications.

We began as a diocese in 2005 as part of the Convocation of Anglicans in North America<sup>1</sup>. This convocation laid essential groundwork that eventually led to the Anglican Church in North America in 2009, marking a pivotal moment in biblically faithful Anglican realignment and mission on this continent. These were very exciting days! I remember Brenda and I realizing we were part of a new missionary movement for our day, and I was so fired up! It had been a long time since I had witnessed Anglicans diving into mission work with such enthusiasm!

The beginnings of the Christian church were also marked by a profound sense of hope, risk and transformation. Emerging from the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, those early Christian communities, empowered by the Holy Spirit, were characterized by an unshakeable belief in the teachings of Jesus and a personal relationship with Him as Savior and Lord. The early church took its first breath with just 120 believers in the upper room in Jerusalem and from that humble beginning, she was driven forward into Judea and Samaria, continuing to spread to the farthest corners of the earth ever since. What an incredible beginning!

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<sup>1</sup> The Convocation of Anglicans in North America (CANA) was established as a missionary district of the Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion), initially founded in 2005. It was formed to provide a home for Anglicans in the United States and Canada who wished to remain faithful to traditional Anglican theology, practice, and worship.

Churches were planted and men, women and children heard about Jesus Christ and were converted and baptized. As this gospel expansion continued, the Lord continued to raise up courageous men and women who took on this call to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ—along with all its implications. They soon began to confront culture head on, to engage in passionate, fiery debates with religious authorities, academics, where every word was charged with conviction. These fearless Christians would even risk giving up their own lives for the expansion and extension of the kingdom of God.

To be a martyr requires the conviction that something holds greater value in this life. With the increasing number of Christians facing persecution and death around the globe, it is critical for Christians in the United States and throughout the Western Church to reclaim a deeper understanding of this solemn principle.

Last month marks a solemn decade since the abduction of 276 Christian schoolgirls from Chibok, Nigeria by Boko Haram—a brutal reminder of the ongoing persecution faced by our brothers and sisters in Christ. Though some girls have escaped or been rescued, over 90 remain missing, their lives altered forever. As the world's attention has moved on, the Church must not forget. We, today, must thoughtfully engage with the profound questions arising at the intersection of faith and death. What motivates individuals to embrace and endure martyrdom?

We live in the long shadow of the Postmodern era—an age defined by skepticism toward absolute truth, the dominance of subjective perspectives, and the spread of relativism. This cultural uncertainty is only deepened by smartphone technology, which fosters dopamine addiction and microscopic attention spans.

The resulting inability to sustain focused attention feeds the widespread anxiety that marks our society. In such a climate—often characterized by apathy, confusion, and fear—how can we account for the unwavering resolve of those who willingly suffer for their faith? And within our American context, where comfort is prized and suffering is avoided at all costs, how do we explain the readiness to embrace death for the cause of Jesus Christ?

Brothers and sisters, one of the great motivations for enduring martyrdom is the clear testimony of Scripture: fulfilling the Great Commission will, in one way or another, require our very lives. Yet, we must remember, everything that appears to be a loss—will be redeemed by the God who is sovereign over all history.

As the shadows of hostility expand globally and the influence of darkness grows stronger, it is imperative for the followers of Jesus Christ in this generation to prepare themselves diligently to articulate clearly and respectfully the faith and hope within the Scriptures.

We are in a war where the enemy controls much of the communications landscape, deploying blatant propaganda to distort truth and sow confusion. If you do not seek out multiple reliable sources of information, you will become a casualty of psychological warfare—either retreating from the field or fighting battles that were never yours to begin with.

Your perception of how strong the darkness is will be shaped by where you get your news. Even sound theology can be misapplied without good situational awareness. Right doctrine must be paired with clarity about what is actually happening around us.

And yet, as the battle intensifies, the line between darkness and light is becoming clearer. The people of darkness are growing more desperate and vicious. But even now, many are turning away from despair and deception. There is a hunger for hope, and signs of awakening—even in the mainstream. Voices from across the spectrum are expressing a surprising openness to God and a renewed search for meaning.

The truth is not only worth defending—it is breaking through.

Brenda and I have discovered, in our almost 20 years of living in this incredible Republic, that the principle of religious freedom—honored and upheld in the founding of this nation—remains one of the most defining features of America. Our nation's founders regarded religious liberty as the "first freedom," a foundational principle upon which all other freedoms depend. They recognized that the freedom to worship and—just as important—to live according to one's religious convictions was essential to the peace and flourishing of society. And while the legal structures remain, it is vital for the Church not to grow complacent in this freedom, but to use it courageously and faithfully. Because this is precisely what the early Church did. They believed that the gospel is God's powerful means of bringing salvation personally, to families, to nations, and throughout the entire world.

One of those bold early believers was Paul of Tarsus.

Born around AD 5, Paul was a Roman citizen and well-educated in both Jewish law and Greco-Roman culture. Initially a zealous persecutor of the early Christian community, his life took a dramatic and divine turn on the road to Damascus, where he encountered the risen Christ. From that moment, the trajectory changed.

Paul embarked on multiple missionary journeys throughout the Roman Empire, planting churches, enduring hardships, and proclaiming the gospel with unwavering resolve. While on his third missionary journey, he wrote a letter to the Christians living in Rome—a community at the heart of the Empire, facing immense pressure yet standing firm in their faith.

The Rev. Steven Wedgeworth shared a portion of that very letter with us just moments ago. Isn't it astonishing to think that we are holding in our hands, a letter written by the Apostle Paul to the Christians in Rome, within the same century that Jesus walked the earth? This is no ordinary letter—it is a divinely inspired text, breathed by the Holy Spirit and embraced by the church as part of the Bible, the infallible Word of God. What a profound reality!

Rome was often referred to as the mistress of the world, the epicenter of a sprawling civilization. A visit to Rome would reveal awe-inspiring architecture, majestic baths, exquisite artworks, and the stirring speeches of great orators. Yet, beneath this grandeur lay a cauldron of moral decay. Corruption was rampant and sexual immorality flourished.

We are hosting this Missions Conference and Synod in the suburbs of our nation's capital city. If you cross the Potomac River, just over 4 miles from this church, you will find yourself in the epicenter of national life. Washington, D.C., sometimes referred to as the capital of the free world, stands as a symbol of power and influence. A visit to D.C. will reveal grand monuments, stately government buildings and world-class museums. The monuments are inscribed with stirring speeches from influential leaders. Yet, beneath this veneer of prestige and authority lies a complex reality.

Scandal and corruption are common in this region and the pursuit of power often overshadows moral integrity. Despite its grandeur, Washington, D.C. is a microcosm of both aspiration and imperfection.

The parallels between our modern society and ancient Rome are both striking and deeply thought-provoking. Against this backdrop, Paul's letter to the Christians in Rome emerges as nothing short of extraordinary. His unwavering resolve to proclaim the Gospel amid such a morally complex and challenging environment highlights his remarkable courage and steadfast dedication to Jesus Christ. This letter is a poignant reminder of the transformative power of faith, even in the face of institutional cultural and ethical attack.

Paul's singular purpose was to boldly proclaim the Gospel. This same gospel purpose was evident in the leadership of some of the early bishops in our own Anglican tradition in North America.

My personal friend and trusted colleague, Dr. Miles Smith, whose wisdom and integrity I so greatly esteem and the Rev. Dr. Adam Carrington, who, the Lord willing, I will have the privilege of ordaining as a presbyter on Saturday morning, have provided an essential glimpse into the lives and ministries of bishops who shaped Anglicanism and early America.

Their compelling new book about 19<sup>th</sup> century American bishops, illuminates the courage of these leaders in the church and the culture who navigated tumultuous political, social, and theological currents, remaining steadfast in their commitment to the Gospel. As the authors themselves state, these were bishops who sought not simply to preserve tradition, but to faithfully proclaim Christ in a rapidly changing nation.

In the pages of this noteworthy work, the authors reintroduce us to Bishop William White, who risked his life ministering to the sick during Philadelphia's deadly yellow fever epidemic; New York's Bishop John Henry Hobart, who boldly upheld Anglican orthodoxy with clarity and charity amidst fierce opposition; and North Carolina's Bishop John Stark Ravenscroft, who fearlessly challenged cultural complacency.

This same heritage is evident in three men among us this morning. These men stand on the shoulders of these early pioneering bishops of this Anglican movement. Each one of these three men share a singular purpose, to boldly proclaim the same gospel which has been entrusted to us by God.

What inspires the Most Reverend Steve Wood to rise each morning, apart from the cherished presence of his beloved wife, is the fervent passion that burns within his heart—a passion to reach the 150 million North Americans who remain untouched by the love of God and the life-changing power of the Gospel. It is this sacred mission that drives him, a calling both profound and urgent, to bring light to those in darkness and hope to those in need of transformation.

Not long after his election as our third Archbishop, I received a telephone call from Archbishop Steve. He said to me, "Let me run something past you. I want to establish something akin to a state department—a mission hub for the Anglican Church in North America." He continued, "I think you're the man to run it." Though hesitant and reluctant at first, what does one say when your Archbishop calls and invites you to serve as a kind of secretary of state? Having already served with Archbishop Steve for many years, I was deeply grateful for his trust and his love.

As many of you know, when it comes to a secretary of state, the usual move is to send them on a series of international diplomatic missions—essentially, to get them out of the way. I wondered if that is what Archbishop Steve was doing with me. Was this new global mission position to be seen as an ecclesiastical timeout? But the Archbishop quickly reassured me that this was not his plan and I came to realize just how much he loved me after receiving my very first assignment: Archbishop Steve sent me into an active warzone! Nothing says 'I care' quite like a ticket to the front lines of an international conflict.

On October 7, 2023, more than 1,200 men, women, and children, including 46 Americans and citizens of over 30 countries, were slaughtered by Hamas in the largest massacre of Jewish people since the Holocaust. Girls and women were subjected to unspeakable acts of sexual violence. The depravity of Hamas' crimes is almost beyond description. Into this chaos, Archbishop Steve sent me—to a warzone—to say to Jews, Christians, Muslims, secular Israelis and others that we, the Anglican Church in North America, care for you and love you. He sent me there with a purpose: to boldly proclaim the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first.<sup>2</sup>

Through this experience, I have come to understand that our archbishop wants to reach people for Jesus through the proclamation of the gospel. His passion is not rooted in novelty or personal ambition, but in the sacred charge that Jude describes as “the faith once for all entrusted to the saints.” Archbishop Steve believes the same Gospel that stirred the hearts of our Anglican Reformers—who stood courageously for the authority of Scripture, the supremacy of Christ, and a soteriology grounded in

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<sup>2</sup> Romans 1:16. πρῶτον can be applied as a priority because in the context of Romans Paul is clear that the gifts of the covenant came to the Jews first (which explains his agony by chapter 9 as a kinsman willing to be cut off for their sake). By Romans 11 this “first” (priority) is plain in Paul's eschatology.



the clear biblical truth that we are saved by grace through faith. That message cost the Reformers dearly—and it has cost Steve Wood dearly too. We are blessed today to have an archbishop whose courage is not theoretical—it is personal, sacrificial, and unwavering.

**Archbishop Steve and Jacqui**, you are among friends here at this Synod. We are honored to welcome you to the Anglican Diocese of the Living Word and to acknowledge and receive you warmly as our Archbishop.

Would you please stand and welcome Archbishop Steve and Mrs. Jacqui Wood.

As we honor the leadership and vision of Archbishop Steve, it reminds me of another dedicated servant and bishop of the church who has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to spreading the Gospel and serving the people of God.

In September 2021, in the very first sermon I heard him preach, the Rt. Rev. William Love said these words from the pulpit of St. George's Anglican Church, Helmetta, New Jersey, "There is one path that leads to eternal life and one path that leads to destruction." I was so encouraged to hear a bishop preach like this. There was no mention of any progressive third way. Only one path, narrow, provided for us by the one loving God through His only Son Jesus Christ. No other way! Only Jesus! What a treasure!

Bishop Bill Love and his wife, Karen, joined the Anglican Diocese of the Living Word in 2021, leaving behind the Episcopal Church after many years of dedicated service.

From the very beginning, it was clear that they would become valued members of our diocesan family, bringing with them a spirit of warmth, wisdom, and commitment to the Gospel. Bishop Bill's ministry has enriched our diocese. But he has not been alone. Karen's own remarkable service to the diocese is a true testament to her boundless energy and dedication. Much like her exhilarating flights in the C-130s from New Zealand to Antarctica, where speed and precision were of the essence, her ministry operated at a similarly brisk tempo that kept us all on our toes!

As we look back on these four years, we are profoundly grateful for the ministry of Bishop Bill and Karen Love. As we release them with our blessing, would you please stand and join me in thanking Bishop Bill and Karen Love.

Earlier, I mentioned that the Apostle Paul had a singular mission: to boldly proclaim the gospel. Yesterday morning, we made the sacred decision of electing a younger man whose own passion echoes this same calling, an individual who, pending the necessary canonical consent from the College of Bishops, will serve as our first elected Suffragan Bishop. Marc Richard Steele is a devoted servant of Jesus Christ who models profound humility and a deep sacrificial love for the people he serves.

His heart for ministry is evident not only by his dedication to the congregation he shepherds at Saint George's in Helmetta, New Jersey, but also in the way he engages with every individual who comes across his path, always ready to listen, support, and encourage. His genuine compassion and unwavering commitment to the gospel inspires those who encounter him.

I recall a little tear forming in my eye, when, during Bishop-elect Marc's formal interview with the nominating committee, he was asked what he would say to the clergy of the diocese if he were elected to serve as our Suffragan Bishop. "I would tell them," he said, "I love them, I will serve them and I will wash their feet."

Marc is blessed beyond measure with the steadfast love of his wife, Korleen — a true companion in the Lord — and their six children, each a living testimony to God's covenant faithfulness from generation to generation. Bishop-elect Marc and Korleen have a marriage that is a testament to the strength of their faith and the foundation of the love that undergirds their family.

It is very important for me to recognize and honor the people of God at Saint George's Helmetta who hold Marc in deep affection, appreciating not only his leadership, but also the remarkable person he is—a devoted shepherd who genuinely cares for his flock. We recognize the changes Marc's episcopal ministry will bring to them. We commit to pray and support them and we are immensely grateful to the congregation in Helmetta, New Jersey, for their deep generosity in sharing Marc and Korleen with us all across the diocese. Thank you, Saint George's.

As we welcome Bishop-elect Marc into this new chapter of ministry as our Suffragan Bishop, we are filled with thankfulness to Almighty God, knowing that, by God's grace, Marc Steele will continue to boldly proclaim the gospel with humility and grace. He is a man without guile who will strengthen our diocese as we journey towards the skopos<sup>3</sup>, the vista, the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> σκοπός skopos; from σκέπτομαι skeptomai (to peer about)

<sup>4</sup> Philippians 3:14

Would you please stand and encourage Bishop-elect Marc Richard Steele and his wife Korleen.

In Romans chapter 1, Paul writes with unwavering conviction, ***I am not ashamed of the gospel.*** This was the fire that burned within him, the very essence of his calling. He gloried in the cross of Christ, and the opinions of others—their judgments, their comparisons, their cultural expectations—meant nothing to him, absolutely nothing. He knew the liberating truth of being set free from the fear of man. ***I am not ashamed***, he said. ***I am not ashamed of the gospel.*** His heart ached for the lost, for those wandering in darkness, separated from Christ.

The question pierces our own hearts: Is this true of us? Is this true of you? Do we carry that same unshakable passion for the lost? Do we cherish the cross with the same relentless devotion? Do we hold fast against compromise with the powers of the age? Does the gospel shape our thoughts, our lives, our choices, our very identity? Where is our confidence? Not in compromise. Not in programs. Not in theological disputes. But in the pure, unrelenting truth of the gospel in all its power! Paul's words resound through time: ***I am not ashamed of the gospel.*** Not ashamed before men. Not ashamed before God.

This unwavering confidence in the Gospel is clearly seen in the dedicated ordained ministers serving throughout the Anglican Diocese of the Living Word, 128 faithful men and women who courageously carry out the work Christ has called them to, precisely because they are not ashamed of the Gospel.

Men like the Very Rev. Belgrave Pelle. While faithfully leading St. Mary's Anglican Church in The Bronx, Belgrave also serves as a prison chaplain at Ulster Correctional Facility, a medium security facility for male prisoners.

Everyday our brother courageously steps into the shadows of society, confronting hardship, brokenness and heartbreak with unwavering faith . Amidst steel doors, concrete walls and the unrelenting weight of human suffering, our brother Belgrave tirelessly ministers hope to souls often forgotten by the world. The challenges he faces—ranging from indifference and hostility to witnessing the deepest expressions of despair—could easily discourage anyone, yet Belgrave Pelle, an Anglican priest, from this diocese, stands unshaken and unwavering. He is not ashamed of the gospel. The gospel is his strength, his anchor and the very foundation upon which he builds every interaction. With relentless compassion, this faithful servant of Christ proclaims the transformative power of Christ's love, boldly demonstrating that even in the harshest environments, God's grace shines brightest.

Belgrave stands as a profound witness to the truth that even behind bars, hope and redemption are possible through Christ.

In a very different setting, but with the same courageous spirit, Deacon Nick Sluyter is standing firm for the gospel in the increasingly hostile environment of the university campus.

Deacon Nick Sluyter. Nick leads the Ratio Christi chapter at Buffalo State University, and this past year he faced intense opposition for standing faithfully for biblical truth. The student government charged that their statement of faith—affirming marriage between one man and one woman, the sanctity of life from conception to natural death, and the rejection of critical theories that undermine biblical justice—was "discriminatory." When they demanded Nick and his team revise their constitution, they refused to compromise. As a result, their group was derecognized and stripped of funding.

At the very meeting where they punished the ministry for affirming the value of life, the student government installed a vending machine distributing Plan B, a form of emergency contraception that Christians rightly recognize raises profound moral concerns. It is clear: the opposition was not to "discrimination," but to genuine Christianity itself. Yet Deacon Nick stood firm—unashamed of the gospel, unwavering in hope, and undeterred in his witness.

Brothers and sisters, this is what faithful ministry looks like today. Lord willing, I will have the privilege of ordaining Nick a presbyter on Saturday morning. Pray for him.

Recently, our diocese faced a difficult disciplinary matter that put our newly established disciplinary canons to the test. By God's grace, the procedures outlined in these canons proved effective and upheld the integrity of our process throughout this situation. But the experience reminded us of the profound importance for clergy and lay leaders to maintain exemplary lives. We are acutely aware of the pressures faced by those who serve the church—pressures that are often immense and multifaceted. Yet, we must also affirm clearly that even a single misstep by those entrusted with leadership not only harms the credibility of our gospel witness but also deeply bruises the church, whose strength and unity depend so greatly on trust and integrity. The Anglican Diocese of the Living Word is committed to the safety and protection of all who enter our doors. We take any allegations of abuse or wrongdoing very seriously and we are dedicated to fostering a secure and safe environment for all the faithful who gather in our congregations, missions, and church plants.

Therefore, it continues to be essential for us all to genuinely and transparently live out and clearly proclaim the gospel.

Faithful Christians today find themselves navigating a complex cultural landscape marked by rapid social change, ideological polarization, and shifting definitions of morality and truth. One of the most pressing challenges is maintaining fidelity to our core biblical beliefs while engaging constructively with a culture increasingly skeptical of religious authority and traditional Christian values. Issues surrounding sexuality, identity, marriage, and the sanctity of life have become particularly contentious, presenting believers with the difficult task of communicating their convictions compassionately, yet firmly.

These cultural struggles are not new to our generation. Contemplate Paul's disposition as he approached the great city of Rome—the famed seven-hilled city filled with crowds flocking to theaters, men and women bowing before idols like Jupiter, immersed deeply in pagan rituals and superstitions. As Paul walked through its gates, seeing this rampant idolatry and decadence, his heart would have been profoundly moved and distressed.

Why such intense emotion from Paul? Because he saw clearly that these people were already living unaware of God's wrath, in desperate danger of eternal judgement. And because Paul acutely knew the gravity and urgency of the gospel entrusted to him, the only message powerful enough to rescue the Romans and all humanity from this eternal wrath, He was convinced that Christ alone could deliver these souls from the righteous wrath of a holy God.

So what of us? We observe our society—people in our workplaces, neighborhoods, those portrayed in media and news—and we might become irate, even heartbroken, by the wickedness we witness. Yet do we share Paul's spiritual clarity and fervor?

Do we view these individuals merely as adversaries, nuisances, or do we recognize their deeper condition—souls abiding under the wrath of God, in desperate need of God’s rescue?

We can be lured, even enticed in these cultural circumstances by the thought of cultural withdrawal. But brothers and sisters, as Rod Dreher, previous speaker at this Missions Conference and Synod recently wrote, “there is really no place to escape to — and besides, unless we are called to be monastics, we have a responsibility to be present in this world”.

I want to speak now directly to the men and boys who are gathered here for this Missions Conference and Synod. We are in the presence of a cultural and spiritual disaster of the first magnitude and it’s time to ‘man up’ and learn how to be biblically faithful as men.

In Western society, and in places in the Western church, men have been effectively emasculated and, in many cases, have abrogated their God-given roles of leadership and service out of fear.

Rather than standing firm in faith, many have been conditioned to shrink back, uncertain of their place in the church, the family, and the culture. Brothers, servant leadership properly understood is an almost self-evident virtue.<sup>5</sup>

Kevin DeYoung elaborates on the significance of God creating humanity as male and female in his book *Men and Women in the Church*. He observes that God could have chosen to create humans differently, such as creating Adam self-sufficient without Eve or vice versa. However, God intentionally created a man and

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.aaronrenn.com/p/servant-leadership>



a woman, emphasizing that this two-sexed humanity was God's idea.

I have been working with some young men across the diocese, in partnership with the Skopos Protestant Reformed Mission Society, to establish an order seeks to call men back to biblical masculinity, where men lead with strength and humility, serve with courage and love and embrace their responsibility as spiritual heads of their homes and churches.

I have drawn inspiration from Saint Edmund the Martyr, a ninth-century king who remained unwavering in his faith despite the threats of Viking invaders. Rather than cower or compromise, Edmund stood firm, refused to deny Christ, and embraced martyrdom in 869 AD. His example reminds Christian men today that true masculinity is not about dominance or self-interest but about sacrificial leadership, bold faith, and unwavering commitment to Christ. Through prayer, study, and brotherhood, members of this order seek to reclaim biblical manhood—to be humble, courageous, and faithful servants of Christ in a culture that seeks to silence and diminish them. The Order will be a call to men to rise up, stand firm, and live as God designed them—strong in faith, steadfast in truth, and unafraid to lead.

We live in an age where biblical masculinity is often misrepresented—by its critics and sometimes by its own adherents. Words like *headship* and *authority* are frequently flattened into caricatures, stripped of their biblical meaning, and used to paint a picture of patriarchy that is self-serving, rigid, and harmful. But the Scriptures paint a far different picture. And I want to say something to anyone, male or female, who may have been hurt in contexts where the biblical teachings on the complementary order of men and women. Biblical truths can be misapplied or mishandled, leading to mistreatment. The biblical

pattern of male leadership should never serve as an excuse for ignoring, belittling, or abusing women.

True biblical complementarity calls on men to protect, honor, and speak kindly to women and to include them appropriately in life and ministry, both at home and in the church.

In that light, as a Christian, as a bishop and as a man, I will not shy away from the language of *masculine virtue*, but I will serve and lead in a manner that redeems it. Not in cultural bravado or nostalgia, but in the incarnate character of Christ—meek and mighty, tender and true.

The headship Christ models is cruciform: it looks like washing feet, bearing crosses and laying down one's life for the sake of others<sup>6</sup> in order to make the Bride of Christ more beautiful. To follow Jesus as a man is not to grasp for control—it is to take up the towel and basin. It is to stand firm when others flee. It is to lead by serving and building and to protect without pride.

As we reflect on biblical masculinity, it's crucial to recognize that beyond the profound call to sacrifice and even die for the faith, there is also a vibrant and positive vision of masculinity in Scriptures. Consider Joshua, leading God's people courageously into new territories, exemplifying bold faith and decisive action. Or Nehemiah, who demonstrates strength and wisdom in rebuilding Jerusalem, providing stability and protection for the community. Daniel, despite profound personal loss, displays steadfast faithfulness, influencing an empire through integrity and godly wisdom. Throughout the Psalms, men are depicted not only in the tension of conflict and challenge but also in creativity, worshipful

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<sup>6</sup> John 13, Ephesians 5

expression, and thoughtful reflection. Joseph, the husband of Mary, embodies faithful stewardship, governance, and provision.

These examples remind us that aspiration, productivity, and provision are not merely permissible but are commendable qualities, essential for the flourishing of families, churches and society under Christ's Lordship.

The Order we will establish is a countercultural signpost—calling men not to retreat, but to re-engage the Church and the world with integrity and faithfulness. Through a shared rule of life, where men grow together, sharpen each other in common mission, common tasks, common pursuits and a commitment to sacrificial service, men are formed into:

- Husbands and fathers who shepherd their families in grace and truth.
- Laymen and clergy who strengthen the life and worship of the Church.
- Servants of the poor, defenders of the weak, seekers and builders—restorers of streets to dwell in [Isaiah 58], and architects of structures for justice.

I am looking for a renewal of Christian manhood that is rooted in the Gospel, sustained by the Spirit, and modeled by Christ. And for that I do not need to apologize. Like the vision in Micah 4:4, I long for a day when *“every man shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid.”* This promise of peace, security, and justice was so powerful that it became a favorite verse of George Washington, who often cited it as the hope for the new nation. It remains a vision for all who serve Christ in the renewal of the world.

In your conference bag, you will find a postcard titled “**Virtus Pollet—Christian Manhood.**” Scan the QR code, follow the prompts, and more information will be shared with you.

Be part of a brotherhood shaped not by noise, but by the Cross.

Listen again to Paul, ***For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”***

Brothers and sisters, the mission of the Church is not complex. The message is not muddy. The call is not unclear. We exist to glorify God in Christ *through* the gospel, and *by* the proclamation of that gospel. That is the task! Not fifty other things. Not cultural approval. Not ecclesiastical maintenance. The proclamation of Christ!

I recognize that, should the Lord allow, I now stand at what is likely the midpoint of my episcopal ministry—34 years ordained, including 14 years serving as a bishop. In sports, halftime provides a critical moment to regroup, assess the progress made and adjust the strategy for the remainder of the game. Likewise, I've been prayerfully reflecting on what has been accomplished and discerning the direction for the next season of ministry, service and leadership. Several months ago, my trusted mentor, Bishop David Bena, encouraged me to seek God's vision for the road ahead and to carefully consider what truly matters, so that the second half might be even more meaningful and fulfilling for the kingdom.

As I look ahead to the next fifteen years, I do so with a deep and growing burden—a gospel fueled ambition to faithfully proclaim

this gospel, I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.<sup>7</sup>

By the grace of God, I want us to see this diocese regionally reproduced through the planting of faithful, Christ-centered churches. Churches where the gospel is preached clearly and without compromise.

Though we hold the single largest footprint of the Anglican Church in North America within the bounds of New York City, the needs remain staggering and the mission opportunity is stunning. St. Mary's in the Bronx, Emmanuel New York City, St. Leonard Brooklyn and nearby St. Matthew's Bay Shore are all laboring with dedication to reach their communities for Christ. I am so proud of each of these congregations and light that radiates from them with the love of Jesus. And yet, in New York City alone, over 7 million people of the approximately 8.5 million people who live in the City do not attend church. Seven million souls—living in the shadow of our steeples—untouched by the hope of the gospel. We can change that!

Our diocese maintains a significant presence here within the Washington, D.C. region where the spiritual need remains profound. In a city of over 700,000 people, recent studies show that more than 500,000 residents—nearly 70% of the population—do not regularly attend church. That's over half a million souls in the very heart of our nation's capital, living apart from the regular hearing of the gospel, disconnected from Christ and His Church.

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<sup>7</sup> Acts 20:25, ESV

D.C. is, in my observation, increasingly shaped by progressive ecclesial models: many churches that are soft on sin, vague on Christ and shaped more by the spirit of the age than by the Spirit of God.

While there are biblically faithful congregations in the District, the theological landscape is dominated by revisionist, egalitarian and liturgically lite ineffective expressions of Christianity that bear little resemblance to the faith once delivered to the saints and the protestant reformed beauty of the Anglican Church.

What D.C. needs is not more churches in general—it needs faithful churches. Churches that are reformed in doctrine, Anglican in identity, and complementarian in conviction. Churches that joyfully uphold God’s design for men and women in the home and in the church—not as a cultural relic, but as a gospel witness. Churches that are deeply rooted in Scripture, grounded in the historic formularies, saturated with the two gospel sacraments and unashamed of the authority of God’s Word in all things.

This is my burden: to see a planting movement rise up in Washington, D.C., that does not blend into the ideological fog, but stands—clear, biblical, beautiful. Not loud, but unmistakable. Not angry, but immovable. Proclaiming Christ crucified, making disciples and building communities of holiness and hope in a city desperate for both. We can do that!

And we can do that—not just in New York City and Washington, D.C.—but in places like Pine Knot, Kentucky, where rural isolation often masks deep spiritual hunger. The Rev. Mike Neal and his team are already there. So too are Matt and Anne Kennedy and the team in Binghamton, New York, where economic decline has left communities weary and where the gospel has often been drowned out by apathy and despair. We can do this in Miami,

Florida—a city of nearly 450,000 people, where over 60% report little to no religious affiliation or attendance, despite its rich ethnic diversity and spiritual openness. The Finlay brothers would welcome your prayers and your partnership. We can do this alongside Archdeacon Carl Eyberg in the towns and cities across Oklahoma, where cultural Christianity may still linger, but where biblical conviction has given way to moral confusion.

And yes, we must do this even within our own tradition, in places where once-vibrant Anglican congregations have grown quiet—seduced by the allure of cultural relevance, weakened by doctrinal drift, or silenced by fear of offense. The need is not just out there in the unreached—it's also within our own house. Let us be like White, Hobart, and Ravenscroft. The answer is not to retreat, but to plant afresh—with clarity, courage, and conviction.

Let us go where the gospel is needed—whether it's a forgotten rural outpost, a bustling urban center or to a part of the world yet untouched by the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Approximately 42% of the world's population, equating to over 3 billion individuals, are classified as "unreached," meaning they have little to no access to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. These individuals reside within approximately 7,400 distinct people groups that lack an indigenous community of believing Christians capable of evangelizing their own population. The majority of these unreached groups are concentrated in the "10/40 Window," a region spanning North Africa, the Middle East, and Asia.<sup>8</sup>

Let us preach where pulpits have gone silent, and plant where compromise has taken root. We are not merely replicating a liturgical form—we are raising up faithful churches, rooted in the

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<sup>8</sup> [https://www.hisfeet.com/how-many-countries-have-not-heard-the-gospel/?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://www.hisfeet.com/how-many-countries-have-not-heard-the-gospel/?utm_source=chatgpt.com).  
[https://joshuaproject.net/resources/articles/has\\_everyone\\_heard?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://joshuaproject.net/resources/articles/has_everyone_heard?utm_source=chatgpt.com)

gospel, unashamed of the Word, and joyfully aligned with God's design for His Church.

As I enter the second half of my episcopal ministry, I do so with a prayerful desire that these coming years would be more fruitful for the kingdom of God than the first. Not because of strength in myself—but because I believe in the enduring power of the gospel, and the faithfulness of the One who calls. I long to see a greater harvest: more churches planted, more laborers raised up, more lives transformed by the righteousness of Christ. I want to spend and be spent for this cause—with more focus, more fervency, and deeper dedication than ever before.

If the first season was for planting and plowing, may this next one be marked by bold sowing and abundant reaping. As the psalmist says, *“Those who sow in tears shall reap with shouts of joy.”* My hope is not simply to reap what we sow—but by God's grace, to reap far more than we have ever sown. For the Lord of the harvest is able to multiply our labors, to bring joy in the toil, and to fill our arms with sheaves we never imagined. May the second half of this ministry be marked by gospel clarity, Spirit-filled courage, and a visible advance of Christ's Church—not for my name, but for His.

And the Lord, in His kindness, has not called me to walk this next season alone. This diocese has given me so much. Each week you pray for me by name. You welcome me in your pulpits and at the Table of the Lord. Thank you so much for your trust. One of the most significant gifts this diocese has now given me is the gift of a *Joshua*—a sharp, Spirit-filled, gospel-hungry, energetic, assertive and proactive man who will serve with me as your suffragan bishop. Younger than me in years, yes, but rich in faith and conviction. An episcopal partner in the field, a co-laborer in the harvest. Bishop-elect Marc's presence, his voice and his



vision will be an instrument of God's grace to me and to us all as we press on forward!

And we are not only looking to the future—we are witnessing it unfold. This very Saturday, by God's grace, we will ordain 6 remarkable men who have answered the call of Christ—people of depth, conviction, and calling. They are not stepping into comfort—they are stepping into battle. They will serve alongside clergy of incredible caliber who we already have in this diocese—faithful, steady, theologically rooted, pastorally tender, and unshaken by the shifting winds of culture.

When I consider all of this—the new leadership God has raised up, the ordinands preparing to be sent out, the strength and depth of the clergy already laboring in our fields—I am like one *who dreams*—Psalm 126 once again. It's almost too much to take in. The Lord is doing something among us—something real, something gracious, something far beyond what we deserve.

Let me conclude.

When I reflect on the faithful servants of God throughout this diocese, my heart is deeply stirred and profoundly grateful. I think of Dean Baldwin, who together with his wife Kyria and son Thomas courageously left behind everything familiar to faithfully serve the Lord in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, embracing uncertainty for the sake of the gospel.

Ife and Lisa Ojetayo who are raising four young men to follow Jesus in Syracuse, New York.

My thoughts turn to the Rev's Joseph and Tima, our dedicated priests in Haiti, tirelessly overseeing 14 congregations within the

Living Word Anglican Mission, embodying resilience and unwavering commitment in challenging circumstances.

I am inspired by Howard and Shelia Smith, who brave long hours on snowy roads each Sunday, driving round-trip from Schenectady to Utica, New York, to faithfully minister the gospel—no weather too harsh, no journey too daunting.

Then there is Jim Salladin, Clint Werezak and their families whose commitments to Christ and his church see them traveling each Sunday through the unpredictable and often unsafe environment of New York City subways, determined to worship and proclaim Christ amid difficulty, challenge and opportunity. On my recent visit to Emmanuel just over a month ago, we had 11 confirmations, which were followed by 10 baptisms on Easter Sunday!

My heart swells with gratitude for David and Mary Ellen Bena, octogenarians who continue to drive, fly, and give generously of themselves in any possible way, exemplifying servant leadership and an unwavering dedication to the well-being of this diocese.

Consider Michael McKinnon, who left Massachusetts, trusting solely in God and his family to plant a new Anglican church in North Carolina—a congregation which, last year, saw the greatest growth in attendance across our diocese.

Jonathan and Megan Wylie, now joined by Matthew and Liz Mahan, are transforming Huntington, West Virginia. Resurrection Huntington now teems with life each Sunday, overflowing with children and families, a vibrant testament to God's active presence and purpose.

What of Archdeacon Jeff Hunt who has already raised up the next rector of Bishop Seabury Anglican Church while at the same time mentoring a church planter in Ashland, Ohio and a growing congregation in Westerville.

Finally, at Holy Trinity in Hillsdale, Michigan, the church has literally no room left. With two overflowing Sunday services and a packed parking lot, the signs are clear—God is faithfully at work, unfolding His divine purpose year after year.

In each of these reports which can be echoed across the mission, congregations and church plants of this diocese, I witness courage, sacrifice, and the unmistakable movement of the Holy Spirit, powerfully reminding us all of the extraordinary work God is accomplishing through ordinary people who have simply said 'yes' to His call with no reserve, no retreat and no regrets.

Steven Wedgeworth who introduced this pastoral address recently wrote, Jesus gave the church an evangelistic mandate, to disciple the nations. People must know that they stand in need of what the church offers: the gospel. The salvation of all mankind is still the most important service that the church can provide to other people. So, this message must be preached. “There is no other name given among men by which we may be saved” than in Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12).<sup>9</sup>

***I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”***<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> <https://wng.org/opinions/a-shortage-of-shepherds-1744064210>

<sup>10</sup> Romans 1:16,17

Reginald Heber was born in 1783 into a wealthy, educated family. He was a bright youth, translating a Latin classic into English verse by the time he was seven, entering Oxford at 17, and winning two awards for his poetry during his time there. After his graduation he became rector of his father's church in the village of Hodnet near Shrewsbury in the west of England where he remained for 16 years. He was appointed Bishop of Calcutta in 1823 and worked tirelessly for three years until the weather and travel took its toll on his health and he died of a stroke.

He wrote 57 hymns, many of which are still in use today such as "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty early in the morning our song shall rise to thee."

Reflecting on the path of discipleship, Heber poignantly wrote:

"A glorious band, the chosen few  
on whom the Spirit came,  
twelve valiant saints, their hope they knew,  
and mocked the cross and flame.  
They met the tyrant's brandished steel,  
the lion's gory mane;  
they bowed their necks the death to feel:  
who follows in their train?"

Then he compellingly answered his own question, offering us this challenge and encouragement:

"A noble army, men and boys,  
the matron and the maid,  
around the Savior's throne rejoice  
in robes of light arrayed.  
They climbed the steep ascent of heav'n

through peril, toil, and pain;  
O God, to us may grace be giv'n  
to follow in their train."

People of God, the conflict is awful, but the victory is sure. We are  
on the conquers side!<sup>11</sup>

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.  
Amen.

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<sup>11</sup> The Christian Ministry, Charles Bridges