

Anglican Diocese of the Living Word | Pastoral Address
Missions Conference and Synod 2026 | McLean, Virginia
The Rt. Rev. Julian M. Dobbs L.Th, Th.M, D.D

There are moments in the life of the Church when it is not enough merely to proceed with business as usual. There are moments that require us to pause, to take account and to discern with sobriety what kind of days we are living through. I believe this is such a moment for us in our diocese. And yet, we do not gather as men and women who are unsure of an outcome. We gather as a people who know their God. As a people who gather under the sovereignty of the One who numbers the hairs of our heads and holds the nations in the hollow of His hand. That is simply what it means to be a protestant people; we begin not with ourselves, but with God.

Moses in Deuteronomy speaks directly to this moment. ***And you shall remember the whole way that the LORD your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness.***¹ Notice the grammar of that sentence. The LORD your God has led you. Not: you have walked. Not: you have survived. Not: you have managed. The subject is God. The verb is led. Israel's forty years in the wilderness were not a series of accidents held together by human resilience. They were the purposeful, sovereign leading of the covenant God who humbled His people, tested their hearts and proved that He alone is the source of life, strength and purpose.

This is what we call covenant theology in its most searching form. God had bound Himself to this people not because of anything in them, Moses makes that plain elsewhere: ***It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set his love on you... but it is because the LORD loves you***². This is Pure grace. Unconditional election. The wilderness does not earn anything. It reveals everything, the faith/lessness of man and the *faithfulness* of God.

And the appropriate response to such a history is not pride, but remembrance. Grateful, humbled, covenant remembrance.

Moses is not alone in this. Joshua takes up the same instinct and gives it permanent, physical form.

In Joshua 4, as Israel crossed the Jordan into the land of promise, the Lord commanded that twelve men take twelve stones from the bed of the river, from the very place where the priests had stood and the waters had parted and carry the stones to the other side. There at Gilgal, those stones were set up as a memorial. Not a monument to Israel's courage. Not a trophy of their own achievement. But as a memorial to what God had done. And the purpose was explicit: ***When your children ask in time to come, 'What do these stones mean to you?' then you shall tell them that the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD***³.

The stones were not for the generation that crossed. They were for every generation that would come after — the children not yet born, who would one day stand at Gilgal and ask: what do these mean? They were set in place so that the question would be asked, and the answer would be given, and the memory would not die.

This is also Anglican conviction at its deepest and most faithful. Anglicans are also people with stones of remembrance.

¹ Deuteronomy 8:2

² Deuteronomy 7:7–8

³ Joshua 4:6–7

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The Thirty-Nine Articles. The Book of Common Prayer 1662. The Ordinal. The homilies. All under the authority of the Word of God with Christ himself as the cornerstone. **These are not museum pieces.** They are Gilgal stones, set in place by men who crossed their own Jordan, who came through fire, exile and martyrdom, so that every generation after them would look at those stones and ask: **what do these stones mean?** And the answer would come back across the centuries: the Lord saved His Church. He led His people through. He dried up the waters of corruption and confusion and doctrinal drift. He brought us to this place. Remember. Cranmer set stones. Ridley set stones. Latimer set stones and sealed them with their blood.

Every stone they laid was an act of faith for a generation they would never meet: a generation that would one day stand before those formularies and ask, what do these mean? And be told: **the authority of Scripture. The grace of God. Justification by faith alone. The Gospel of Jesus Christ, recovered, confessed, and handed on.**

We are a Diocese that remembers. And before I speak of the stones of today's generation, we must name those who were here before us, who paid what we did not pay and who built what we now inhabit.

Every generation of the Church builds on the prayers and labors of the past. Every diocese that gathers today does so because men and women of a previous generation gave themselves, their time, their treasure, their energy, their faith, to the unglamorous, unrecognized, often thankless work of beginning. They did not know what would come of it. They only knew that the Lord had called them, in their time and they answered.

The Anglican Diocese of the Living Word is no different. We did not appear fully formed. We were planted. We were prayed for and commissioned. We were built, stone by stone, by people who believed in something they could not yet see, who gave themselves to a diocese in its earliest and most fragile days, when there was no guarantee of what it would become, and who gave generously and faithfully regardless. It is right that we name them. It is right that we honor them. Not because they would seek recognition, *those who truly lay foundations rarely do*, but because we are a people of remembrance. We set stones so that our children and grandchildren will ask: what do these stones mean? And one of the answers must always be: they mean that faithful men and women went before us, paid a cost we did not pay, and built something we now inhabit.

And what they built is bearing fruit.

Thanks be to God, in this Diocese, we grew. Over the past twelve months, our average Sunday attendance increased by 11%. Many evangelical churches are reporting flat or declining attendance in the years since COVID. Against that backdrop, 11% growth is a gift to be received with deep gratitude. It means that men, women, and children, in our congregations, across our nine archdeaconries, are coming to worship the living God. Coming to the font. Coming to the Table. Coming into a living relationship with Jesus Christ. Coming to an expression of Christianity that is genuinely ancient, not in affectation but in substance: reading the Scriptures with the Church Fathers, praying the prayers of the early martyrs, and confessing Christ with Clement of Rome, with Irenaeus, with Athanasius, with the councils of the undivided Church. That is what 11% means.

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And if you want to hear the fuller *Provincial* picture, join me in Tulsa, Oklahoma in two weeks time, when I will deliver my address as Dean of the Province to the Provincial Council. I will tell you then what the Lord has been doing across this Province — and it will encourage your soul.

But today, here, we begin with remembrance.

This year we have established **the Bishops' Living Stones Award**, to honor those who, through their faithfulness, set stones in place, not merely to divide or defend, but to build a dwelling place where the Word of God is written on the doorposts and the faith is passed through the gates to the next generation.

The inaugural recipient of *The Bishops' Living Stones Award* came to ordained ministry later in life. He was sixty-eight years old when an Episcopal bishop defrocked him, ordered him from his church building, and told him and his congregation to vacate his pre-Revolutionary War parish — established in 1747. The New York Times ran a story. The legal battles lasted three years. He and his congregation walked away from \$1.2 million dollars of property rather than compromise the faith once delivered to the saints.

He had no plans to go quietly. He said he was confident that his people would persevere even if they lost the right to the church, the rectory, and the burial grounds his congregation had held for generations. When asked about it, he said six words that deserve to be remembered: "It's the people, not the steeple."

They persevered. For five years they wandered — five years in what he himself called the desert. And then a Baptist congregation two miles away, reduced to six members, closed its doors. And they gave their building to this faithful Anglican remnant. No strings attached. No cost. No hidden charges.

That is a stone. Set in place by a man who refused to be quiet and refused to give up — who led his people through five years of wilderness, who trusted that the Lord who sets stones before the walls are built had not forgotten them. And he was right.

It was my intention to honor this courageous man in person at this Synod. To call him forward. To place this award in his hands and to say to his face what I now must say to his memory.

The Venerable Donald Helmandollar has now gone to the Lord. He passed from this life on April 22, just weeks ago. He was eighty-six years old. Ordained to the presbyterate in Connecticut after a distinguished career in the United States Navy — bringing to ordained ministry the same faithful commitment he had given to his country. He was one of the Connecticut Six. He fought the good fight. He finished the race. He kept the faith.

I was privileged to collate Don as Archdeacon in the diocese on April 13, 2016 and call him confidant, mentor, and friend. He was a Christ-centered, humble man — married to Fran for sixty-six years, a faithful member of my personal intercessory prayer team, a man of quiet conviction who never sought the spotlight and never needed it.

Don and those men and women who served in his time were faithful. And that is the thread that runs through everything I am about to say to you today in this pastoral address: the consecration of a bishop, the inhibition of an archbishop, a global gathering in Abuja, an ancient evil that has reemerged in our day, the planting of new congregations, and a marriage that

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began at the end of a road, every single one of these is a stone set by the hand of God. Set before the need was visible. Set so that those who come after us will ask: what do these stones mean? And we will be able to say: the Lord led us. The Lord provided. The Lord did not fail.

That is what we are doing here. That is what this Missions Conference and Synod is: an act of covenant remembrance and a setting of stones for those who come after us. With our applause, let us honor the Venerable Donald Helmandollar — who finished his course, and left his stones for us to build upon.

I must also pause to honor another faithful servant whom the Lord has called home just days ago.

The Reverend Warren Musselman served among us as a vocational deacon. He brought honor to that office in every sense. Ordained on February 19, 2012, he served faithfully at Saint Andrew's, Endicott, and at the Anglican Church of the Good Shepherd in Binghamton. He was a stalwart supporter of the Living Word Anglican Mission in Haiti and a loyal and beloved member of our diocesan family.

Warren died during the night of Tuesday May 5. We have barely had time to grieve. I had the privilege of ordaining Warren to the diaconate. To place hands upon a man and set him apart for the service of God and His Church is one of the great privileges of the episcopate. Warren wore that calling with quiet faithfulness, without seeking recognition, without fanfare — exactly as a deacon should.

He will be greatly missed.

Would you please stand as we give thanks to God for the life and ministry of the Reverend Warren Musselman. And as you stand, would you pray for his wife Chris, and for all who mourn his passing.

[Pause]

Warren's worship and ours continue. Him in heaven, we on earth — the same Lord, the same faith, the same hope.

On the Consecration of Bishop Marc Steele

When we last met in the building, we took the historic step of electing our first Suffragan Bishop. Three months later, we consecrated Bishop Marc Richard Steele.

Who would have thought, in that incredible service at Good Shepherd Binghamton, what God in His providence had already arranged? This is precisely what the reformed doctrine of providence insists upon: that God's governance of history is not reactive. He does not improvise. He does not respond to crises after the fact. He ordains the ends and the means together. The raising up of this faithful man to the episcopate was not merely a diocesan milestone, it was a stone cut and placed before the wall knew it was coming.

Within months of our suffragan bishop's consecration, I was called to assume additional responsibilities at the provincial level in the Anglican Church in North America. It was because Bishop Marc stood faithfully in this diocese that I could answer that call with an unfettered

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conscience. The Lord had provided before the need was visible. That is what we mean when we confess the sovereignty of God, not a cold philosophical abstraction, but a decision of the Creator of heaven and earth made visible in the details of church life.

Watching Bishop Marc step into this episcopate has been one of the quiet joys of a demanding season. He has not simply filled a role. He has brought himself — his faith, his steadiness, his love for Christ and for this flock — and this diocese is the richer for it.

Will you stand — and with the full voice of this Synod — honor our Suffragan Bishop, Marc Steele, and his wife Korleen and their family!

And I want to say a word about another bishop and his wife. Bishop David Bena and Mary Ellen.

David has been my trusted mentor across many years of episcopal ministry. He and Mary Ellen are now both octogenarians — and they continue to drive, to fly, and to give generously of themselves in any way they can, exemplifying servant leadership and an unwavering dedication to the well-being of this Diocese. Bishop Dave's counsel has shaped my episcopate more than he knows. There are people in your life whom the Lord sends not for a season but for the whole journey. David and Mary Ellen Bena are those people for Brenda and me. We love them. We are grateful for them. And we pray that the Lord gives us many more years of their friendship, their wisdom, and their faithful, generous presence in our lives and in this Diocese.

Bishop Dave and Mary Ellen Bena.

On the Inhibition of the Archbishop and My Role as Dean

The year also brought developments within our Province that none of us would have chosen. The inhibition of our archbishop ushered in a season of strain, grief, and unexpected responsibility. I was called to serve as Dean of the Province.

There is nothing easy to say about what this season has required. But I will say this: purposefully protestant Christianity has never promised that faithful men will be spared difficulty. It has promised that God works all things, *all things*, together for good for those who are called according to His purpose⁴. That is not a greeting card sentiment. It is a load-bearing promise from the word of God for hard seasons.

The wilderness is never a detour from God's purposes. It is God's purpose, for a season. Moses knew that. Joseph knew it before him. And the Church in every generation has had to learn it fresh — the path to fruitfulness often runs directly through the place of testing.

As many of you are aware: the matter is not yet concluded. An ecclesiastical trial process is underway. The wheels of church discipline turn slowly and yet, they must turn carefully — for the sake of justice, for the sake of the Church, and for the sake of all involved. I ask for your continued prayers. The Province needs men and women who will hold this matter in intercession before the Throne of Grace, without rushing to judgment and without losing heart. The same God who ordains the ends ordains the means. He is not surprised by any of this. He was not caught off-guard when this began, and He will not be absent when it concludes. We remain in His sovereign hands.

⁴ Romans 8:28

We will sing this together before this Synod is done: *When through the deep waters I call thee to go, The rivers of woe shall not thee overflow.*⁵ We remain in His sovereign hands.

On the Martyrs' Day Statement⁶

Before I speak of Abuja, I must speak of what came before it, because what happened on October 16th, 2025, did not arrive without preparation.

October 16th is the day the Church commemorates the martyrdom of Hugh Latimer and Nicholas Ridley — two men who died at Oxford in 1555 rather than surrender the truth of the Gospel. It was on that day, that some Gafcon Primates and other leaders gathered and issued the Martyrs' Day Statement. I was privileged to be at the table in Macquarie, Australia when that declaration was made.

I do not say that to elevate myself. I say it because I want you to understand that what I am about to describe is not something I read about from a distance. It was something I witnessed, something I participated in, something I believe to have been a genuine movement of God the Holy Spirit in our time.

The statement opened with three words that carry the weight of two decades of faithful labor: **"The future has arrived."** From Jerusalem in 2008, through Nairobi and Sydney and Kigali, the faithful remnant of global Anglicanism had pleaded, appealed, reasoned, and prayed — calling erring Anglican provinces back to the authority of Holy Scripture, seeking repentance, seeking reform. And when that call went unanswered year after year, what those gathered on October 16th declared was not bitterness, nor a hasty departure, but the sober conclusion of a long and patient obedience: the time for appeals had passed and the time for clarity had arrived. The statement was bold — speaking of a reordering of the Anglican Communion and introducing, for the first time, the phrase **"Global Anglican Communion."** Some heard that and feared a split. But as one colleague put it simply: this was not a Declaration of Independence. It was a confession of ongoing dependence on the unchanging Word of God once for all delivered to the saints.⁷

I am grateful to have been there. I am grateful that this diocese was represented at that table. And I am grateful that the Lord did not let that moment pass without witnesses.

On G26 and the Global Anglican Communion

And then came Abuja.

If the Martyrs' Day Statement was the declaration, G26 was the assembly. In Abuja, Nigeria, from the 3rd to the 6th of March, **347 Anglican bishops and 121 lay and clerical leaders from 27 provinces** gathered to do what the statement had called them to do: to take the next steps together, under the Word of God, in the reordering of global Anglicanism.

⁵ How firm a foundation, Text: Attr. to Robert Keen, ca. 1787

⁶ <https://gafcon.org/communique-updates/the-future-has-arrived/>

⁷ Jude, verse 3.

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Consider what that means. Not a committee. Not a consultation of delegates. Nearly 350 bishops of the Church of God — from every inhabited continent, representing the vast majority of the world’s Bible-believing Anglicans — gathered in Nigeria under the theme drawn from Joshua: “Choose this day whom you will serve.”

I want to speak carefully here, because this moment deserves both honesty and generosity of spirit.

The communiqué from Abuja made clear that the existing structures of the Anglican Communion centered on the historic see of Canterbury have failed to maintain doctrinal accountability, particularly in relation to the authority of Scripture and biblical teaching on sexuality. That is a weighty charge to which I added my name. But it is not a new charge and it is not an unfair one. The so-called Instruments of Communion, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Lambeth Conference, the Anglican Consultative Council, and the Primates’ Meeting were formally set aside for their failure to uphold the doctrine and discipline of the Anglican Communion. These structures, which many of us grew up cherishing, have become instruments not of accountability *but of accommodation*. They promised *unity* and delivered *confusion and division*. They promised *doctrinal fidelity* and delivered *heresy and abandonment*.

And yet, what was declared at Abuja was not the abandonment of the Anglican tradition. It was precisely the opposite. The Global Anglican Communion is not something new, it is the same Anglican family renewed around its original center: the authority of Scripture, read and lived out through the theological vision of the English Reformation — and behind the Reformation, the Fathers; and behind the Fathers, the Apostles; and behind the Apostles, the Lord Himself.

That is the inheritance. That is what Abuja is stewarding. That is what the Martyrs’ Day Statement was contending for. Not novelty. Not institutional ambition. But the ancient, beautiful, Reformed and evangelical faith which holds that the Bible alone is the Word of God, that Christ alone is the head of the Church, and that no Archbishop, however venerable his see, has the authority to revise what God has spoken and Scripture has sealed. *That authority belongs to no man. It never has. It never will.*

This is profoundly Deuteronomic. What Joshua said to Israel on the far side of the wilderness, choose this day whom you will serve, is what the Church was called to declare in Abuja. And the bishops of the majority of the world’s Anglicans stood up and said: as for us and our house, we will serve the Lord.

Silence is Not an Option

I want to linger for a moment before I move on from the Global Anglican Communion because what happened in Abuja, what happened on October 16th in the Martyrs’ Day Statement, was a declaration that the Church of Jesus Christ must speak plainly, whatever the cost, whatever the pressure, whatever the cultural mood. It was a declaration that *silence in the face of theological compromise is not neutrality. It is complicity.*

And if that is true of theological compromise within the Church, it is no less true of a specific and ancient evil that is rising again in the nation we call home. Eight weeks ago, during Holy Week, Brenda and I were in the Holy Land. I filmed devotionals at the Gospel sites. We worshiped with our brothers and sisters at Christ Church, Jerusalem. And I returned from that visit more burdened than ever about something the Church in North America must not avoid.

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Antisemitism is the oldest hatred in the history of civilization. The first recorded incident is Haman in the Bible with his abusive attempts to eradicate the Jewish people. From then, as part of Western culture, this curse has been carried into the Church itself through a corruption in the reading of the Scriptures and a misunderstanding of the connection between the Jewish people and the Hebraic heritage of the Christian faith. And from that misunderstanding, antisemitism has risen again and again. It distorts the very character of God and it is an assault on the very Scriptures that have been handed down to us.

The data confirms what the spirit already knows. The American Jewish Committee's 2025 report found that 91% of American Jews say they feel less safe in the United States as a result of violent attacks in the past year. One in three American Jews report being a personal target of antisemitism. On May 22nd 2025, two young Israeli diplomats were murdered outside the Capital Jewish Museum in Washington, D.C. — just four miles from where we are gathered. **Four miles from this room – just over 12 months ago.**

I want to say something carefully, because it matters. Standing against antisemitism does not mean that we always have to agree with Jewish people, or with the State of Israel. Neither do we have to agree theologically with one another, or politically with one another. And it does not mean that we cannot support Palestinians.

There is a phrase in Micah 4:4 that George Washington loved so much he used it more than fifty times in his correspondence. He applied it most memorably in his 1790 letter to the Hebrew Congregation at Newport, Rhode Island, writing that in this new nation, the children of Abraham ***shall sit in safety under his own vine and fig tree, and there shall be none to make him afraid***⁸. And today, in 2026, Jewish Americans are hiding their Stars of David in the nation George Washington promised them would be different.

Brothers and sisters, silence in the face of evil is always evil itself. And God will not hold us guiltless.

Remember, the God of Abraham has not changed. The Gospel is first to the Jew⁹.

Purposefully Protestant — Reformed, Catholic, and Evangelical

There is a word I want to reclaim before we go any further. And that word is **protestant**. I know that word makes some people nervous. In certain Anglican circles it has become almost unfashionable, as though to call oneself Protestant is to confess something slightly embarrassing, something to be qualified or softened or explained away. Some prefer to say we are Catholic. Others say we are Reformed. Others still reach for the phrase Reformed Catholic, which is closer to the truth, but which can itself become a way of avoiding the plain declaration. So let me be plain.

We are Protestant. Not in spite of our Anglican heritage, but because of it. The English Reformation was not an accident of politics. It was a recovery of the Gospel. Cranmer, Ridley, Latimer, the men whose martyrdom we commemorated on October 16th, did not die for institutional preference. They died because they believed that salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, revealed in Scripture alone, to the glory of God alone. Those

⁸ Micah 4:4

⁹ John 4:22, Acts 13:46, Romans 1:18

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five great Reformation convictions are not foreign imports grafted onto Anglicanism. They are the marrow of it. They are what the Thirty-Nine Articles confess. They are what the 1662 Book of Common Prayer enshrines. They are what we mean when we call ourselves Anglican. And yes, we are also catholic. Not Roman. But catholic in the historic sense: one, holy, catholic, apostolic church. We receive the three creeds. We receive the four great councils. We stand in continuity with the Church of every age and every place. There is nothing narrow about Reformed Anglicanism. It is, in fact, the broadest and deepest stream of Christianity available to us — because it is anchored in the Word of God and therefore connected to the whole people of God across all of history.

This is what it means to be Purposefully Protestant. Not merely in name. Not merely in history. But in conviction, in practice, and in the joyful, grateful confidence that the Gospel of Jesus Christ, proclaimed in the Word and sealed in the sacraments, is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.

Virtus Pollet — A Canon for Virtue and Formation

But a church that is Purposefully Protestant cannot rest content with right doctrine alone. The Reformers never did. They knew that the Word faithfully preached and the sacraments rightly administered require men and women of formed character to preach and administer them.

At last year's Synod, I spoke directly to the men. I told you then that we are in the presence of a cultural and spiritual disaster of the first magnitude. I told you it was time to 'man up', to learn what it means to be a biblically faithful man in this generation. I return to that theme today, because the need has not diminished. If anything, it has grown.

The New Testament has a word for what I am calling for. It is the Greek word ἀνδρίζεσθε — andrizomai. It appears in 1 Corinthians 16:13, where Paul commands: "Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong." Act like men. Not as a cultural relic. Not as a license for dominance or pride. But as a call to the kind of courageous, sacrificial, servant leadership that the Scriptures commend throughout — we see this in **Joseph** who governed with integrity in the palace of a pagan king, in **Joshua** who led with bold faith into an unknown land, in **Daniel** who stood firm in exile when the world demanded compromise, in **Nehemiah** who rebuilt the broken walls of a shattered city, in the **Apostle Paul** who pressed on without counting the cost.

I want to say clearly to any woman who is listening: this call is not against you, biblical masculinity, rightly understood, *is for you*. The headship Christ models is cruciform, it looks like washing feet, bearing crosses, and laying down one's life so that others may flourish. The biblical pattern of male leadership should never serve as an excuse for ignoring, belittling, or diminishing women. Men who lead as Christ leads will protect, honor, and serve the women around them. A diocese of formed men is a diocese where women are safer, not less safe. But I will not apologize for the call. In Western society, and in parts of the Western church, men have been effectively emasculated, conditioned to withdraw, uncertain of their place in the church, the family, and the culture.

Consider what we are doing to our boys. Boys are falling behind in reading. Boys are falling behind in graduation rates. Boys are being told, from their earliest years, that the way they are wired is a disorder. Sit still. Be quiet. Stop moving. And when they cannot, when the God-given restlessness of a young man refuses to be contained by a classroom chair and a worksheet, we do not ask what they need. **We ask what is wrong with them!**

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Nothing is wrong with them. Everything is wrong with a system that has forgotten how to form men. We are conditioning a generation of boys from childhood to receive dopamine instantly, effortlessly, and endlessly. A flick of the thumb. A burst of pleasure. We are training their brains to expect reward without effort. And then we wonder why young men cannot endure the slow, unglamorous work of discipleship and formation.

The situation is not improving. It is accelerating. And the Church cannot meet an accelerating crisis with another committee, another conference, or another carefully worded statement.

Building on what I announced to you last year, I am appointing the **Rev. Ife Ojetayo to serve as our Canon for Virtue and Formation.**

Those of you who know **Ife** will understand immediately why. He is a man of deep biblical conviction, pastoral warmth, and biblical backbone. He is a husband, a father of four boys and a faithful servant of Jesus Christ.

Ife will develop a rule of life called **Virtus Pollet**. *Virtus Pollet*, Latin for "virtue prevails," developing the apostolic charge in 2 Peter 1:5: "Make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue."

Under his leadership, Virtus Pollet will take concrete shape across this Diocese. It will be built on **three** keystones:

The first is a public forum. Canon Ojetayo will *virtually* convene the men of the Diocese for sustained teaching from the Scriptures, from the Anglican divines, and from the great confessional sources of our tradition.

The second is formation cohorts. Small groups of four to six men, meeting monthly in regional proximity wherever possible, because the work of formation is best done face to face.

The third foundation: the Virtus Pollet Rule of Life. Each man who joins will commit himself to a shared covenant of daily Christian formation: to pray Morning or Evening Prayer daily, to attend the Lord's Supper regularly and keep the Lord's Day holy, to read the Scriptures systematically, to walk in brotherly accountability and service, to pursue integrity in home, work, and parish, and to practice repentance and thanksgiving continually. That is the rule. It is not heroic. It is not novel. It is the ordinary, ancient pattern of Christian formation, recovered and lived together.

This is what we are building. Not a slogan. Not a conference circuit. **A formation. A rule. A brotherhood.** Men, clergy and lay together, who will live by Scripture, anchored in the classical Christian traditions, committed to a shared rule of prayer, virtue, and service, as they lead their families, build up the Church, and stand firm in the world.

This is another stone. There are walls yet to rise, men yet to be formed, congregations yet to be planted, and a harvest yet to be gathered.

The Call to Conversion

I want to begin this section personally. Not with a program. Not with a strategy. But with a testimony.

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I believe in conversion, *because I was converted*. Jesus opened my eyes to see the sin in my own life. He showed me my need. He showed me His grace. And nothing has been the same since. That is not religious language. That is the testimony of a man who met the living God, and who knows that apart from that meeting, he was lost.

And it is precisely because I was converted that I believe, with everything in me, that the United States needs to be converted. Not influenced. Not engaged. Not made more comfortable with Christianity. Converted. Brought from darkness to light. From the power of Satan to God.

This is not a new idea. It is the oldest idea in the world. It is what the Apostles preached. It is what the Reformers recovered. It is what Article XI of the Thirty-Nine Articles anchors in the justifying grace of God alone, received through faith alone. Conversion is not a technique. It is a sovereign work of the Holy Spirit, applied through the faithful preaching of the Word of God, that Article VI declares to be sufficient for salvation, containing all things necessary to eternal life.

And so, will you make a commitment with me, not a vague aspiration, but a resolute commitment to seeing the lost brought to faith in Jesus Christ. To praying for and meeting the unconverted by name. To making our congregations places where the Gospel is proclaimed with such clarity and such warmth that those who do not yet know Christ cannot leave unchanged.

Consider what that means in concrete terms. The Anglican Church in North America has set before itself a breathtaking provincial commitment: **500 new churches in the next 10 years**. Five hundred congregations where the Word of God will be preached, where the sacraments will be administered, where men and women and children will be converted and disciplined in the faith. That goal is grounded in reality — the Province has planted between 25 and 30 new churches every year since 2016. This is not wishful thinking. It is a vision with roots.

So, what is our share of that vision? I invite you to pray with me for three new church plants in this diocese, every year. Three churches annually, each one a living room, a rented hall, a borrowed sanctuary, each one a stone set in place before the wall is built. Over the next ten years, that is thirty new congregations bearing the Gospel into communities across this Diocese that do not yet have a faithful Anglican witness.

Three per year. Thirty in a decade. That is our commitment. That is our share of the harvest.

And consider what three new congregations every year, faithfully planted and faithfully growing, could mean. If each of those churches reached just 50 souls in the first five years, 50 men, women, and children who were not in a Gospel-preaching church before, that is 150 new lives every year being formed in the Word of God, in the sacraments of the Church, in the faith once delivered to the saints. Over ten years, planting thirty congregations, each reaching 50 souls, that is 1,500 people, in our Diocese alone, who might otherwise never have heard.

1,500 people. *1,500 Tim Felches*. 1,500 individuals finding their way home.

That is worth everything.

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And I want to celebrate with you this Synod a living example of exactly that kind of faithful Gospel work. **Holy Cross Anglican Church, Indianapolis**, is with us here today, the most recent church plant in the Anglican Diocese of the Living Word.

Joseph Myshko planted this congregation in his living room.

Not a building. Not a budget. Not a denominational launch team with a marketing strategy. A living room. A man with a conviction that the Gospel of Jesus Christ belonged on the westside of Indianapolis. A handful of people willing to gather around the Word, around the ancient liturgy of the Church, around the Table of the Lord and trust that the God who sets stones before walls are built had not forgotten that neighborhood.

That is how the Church has always grown, not from the top down, but from the living room out. One faithful man and his wife. One conviction. One stone set in place before anyone knew what was being built.

Jospeh Myshko — would you please stand.

And then there is **Emmanuel**.

Emmanuel Anglican Church in Ashland, Ohio began the way so many Gospel works begin: a handful of people, a living room, evening prayer, and a conviction that the Lord was calling something into being. Dr. Adam Carrington, planter, rector, and faithful servant of the Word, gathered those first few souls around the ancient liturgy of the Church, and began to pray, and began to preach, and began to trust that the God who had set stones in walls before they were needed had not forgotten Ashland, Ohio.

And then something remarkable happened. A local Methodist congregation found themselves at a crossroads. They had a building. They had a faithful remnant. And they had a question: where do we go from here? They contacted Dr. Carrington. Conversations began. And in the providence of God, that same providence that ordains the ends and the means together, that sets stones before the walls are built, that Methodist congregation transferred their building and their people to Emmanuel Anglican Church.

Earlier this year, Brenda joined me for my first episcopal visit to Emmanuel. I confirmed seven people, men and women drawn from both the original plant and the Methodist congregation that had found its home, seven souls publicly professing the faith once delivered to the saints, in a building that had been given as a gift of providence, *in a town that a faithful planter had refused to give up on*.

And earlier today, at this Synod, Emmanuel Anglican Church was received as a congregation of the Anglican Diocese of the Living Word.

Do you see what is happening? A living room. Evening prayer. A Methodist building. Seven confirmations. A diocesan vote. Stone upon stone upon stone. The Lord was not caught off-guard in Ashland, Ohio. He was building long before anyone knew what He was building. When the children ask in time to come, what do these stones mean — tell them. **The Lord did this. Emmanuel. God with us.**

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Would Dr. Carrington and those from Emmanuel Anglican Church please stand.

And then, **there is Trinity Anglican Parish, Greenville South Carolina.**

This is a congregation that has been on a journey. For years, Holy Trinity has gathered as an independent church, holding the 1662 Book of Common Prayer, confessing the Thirty-Nine Articles, standing on the Ecumenical Creeds and the Definition of Chalcedon¹⁰ — a congregation that knew exactly what it believed and knew exactly where it belonged, but had not yet found its home. They have been meeting, beautifully and providentially, in Francis Asbury United Methodist Church in Greenville, worshiping in the ancient Anglican liturgy under the roof of a tradition that itself began as a reform movement within the Church of England. There is a sermon in that detail alone.

Pastor Eddy Field has led this congregation with faithfulness, with patience, and with a clarity of conviction that has held them together through the years of waiting. They have not drifted. They have not compromised. They have simply held the stones they were given, the Prayer Book, the Articles, the creeds, the Word of God and trusted that the Lord would bring them to the place He had prepared.

He has. Today, at this Synod, we received Holy Trinity Parish, Greenville, South Carolina as a congregation of the Anglican Diocese of the Living Word!

Do you see the pattern? A living room in Ashland, Ohio. A United- Methodist building in Greenville, South Carolina. A handful of people in each place, holding the ancient faith, waiting on the God who sets stones before the walls are built. And now, stone upon stone upon stone — they are coming home.

Would Pastor Eddy Field and those from Trinity Anglican Parish, Greenville, South Carolina please stand.

But it is not only congregations that the Lord is setting as stones. It is individuals too. It is families. It is a young man with a theology quiz, a yellow legal pad, and a wife who was searching alongside him.

Aaron Page grew up Southern Baptist. His father is a Southern Baptist pastor. His grandfather is a Southern Baptist pastor. His uncle and great uncle were Southern Baptist pastors. He had recently become a deacon and was set to be ordained in January of 2026. He had no plans to become an Anglican.

But the Lord, as Aaron himself says, had other plans.

In early 2025, preparing to lead a young adult study group, Aaron began to challenge himself theologically for the first time. He completed his first full read-through of the Bible. He took a 63-question theology quiz called *Theo Compass*. He began to clarify what he actually believed — not what he had inherited, but what he would stake his life on.

¹⁰ Fully God and fully man — two complete natures, divine and human, united in one person without confusion, without change, without division, and without separation.

And then he and his wife sat down together and wrote out 21 carefully worded belief statements. They typed them into an AI — ChatGPT, to be specific — and asked it a simple question: given what we believe, what denomination are we?

The AI replied:

"One tradition fits your criteria unusually well, more closely than Baptist, Catholic, or Eastern Orthodox. After weighing every point carefully, your profile most certainly matches: Conservative Anglicanism and Reformed Catholicism — specifically the ACNA, and even more precisely, dioceses such as the Anglican Diocese of the Living Word. Reasons why it fits you perfectly: you reject congregationalism and want external accountability, you dislike performance-oriented worship, you crave participatory and reverent worship, you believe in spiritual presence in the Communion, you affirm the Nicene Creed, you are seeking a set-in-stone historic worship structure that the Book of Common Prayer would provide, you affirm traditional marriage, affirm male-only priesthood. ADLW is your number one match."

Aaron Page did not go looking for the Anglican Diocese of the Living Word. An algorithm found it for him. And because the Church of the Resurrection was there, planted, rooted, Gospel-centered, pastored by the Rev. Dr. Jonathan Wylie, Aaron and his wife Erika found a home. They are now weekly attenders. They are expecting their first child.

Aaron Page is with us at this synod – Aaron, would you please stand.

That is what church planting does. It puts a church in the path of people whom God is already forming and shaping — people who are growing, searching, pressing deeper into the faith they already hold. Aaron Page was not looking for Christianity. He was looking for more of it. God used an algorithm, and a planted church, to bring Aaron and Erika to the Anglican Diocese of the Living Word.

The harvest is plentiful. The workers are few. We pray therefore —and we plan, and we act, and we plant.

A Final Word

I want to close with another stone.

One that was set in place not months before it was needed, but thirty-five years ago — long before I knew what wall was being built, long before I knew what work lay ahead, long before I had any idea what the Lord was preparing me for.

In 1991, a young man *at the end of the road* met the woman who would become his wife. I mean that literally. **Westport, New Zealand**, sits on the West Coast of the South Island — a town of perhaps four thousand souls, set against the Tasman Sea. And that is where the road ends. Not figuratively. The road stops. You cannot go further. It is, by any measure, one of the most improbable places on earth for anything of consequence to begin.

And yet.

The Lord who ordains the ends and the means together — the Lord who sets stones in walls before the walls are needed — brought Brenda and me together in that small town, at the end of

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that road, thirty-five years ago. We were married in 1991. Neither of us knew what He was doing. We only knew that He had done it.

Moses called Israel to remember the whole way that the Lord had led them.

I cannot speak of the whole way the Lord has led this Diocese, or this Province, or this global Anglican moment, without speaking of my wife, Brenda. Because she is not incidental to that story. She is woven into it. She has been, *under God*, the stone He gave me — not only for this moment, but for every moment. In the years of obscurity and the years of responsibility. In the seasons of fruitfulness and the seasons of testing. In the consecrations and the crises. Through every wilderness, she has been there.

Bishop J.C. Ryle understood that what happens at home shapes what happens in the pulpit. He wrote: "The Bible in the pulpit must never supersede the Bible at home." I believe that. *I have lived that*. What you have seen in *this episcopacy* has been formed, in no small measure, in a marriage, a marriage that began at the end of a road in a small New Zealand town and has been carried, by the grace of God, to the ends of the earth.

And speaking of that journey — later this year, Brenda and I will celebrate twenty years of life in these United States of America. We came as strangers to this country. And what we found was this: you welcomed us. Virginia welcomed us. The Anglican Church in North America welcomed us. You gave us a home, a people, a ministry, a future. We did not deserve that welcome. We could not have earned it. It was grace — the same grace that carried Israel through the wilderness, the same grace that sets stones in walls before the walls are needed. We owe this country, this church, this Diocese a debt we can never fully repay. And we intend to spend whatever years the Lord gives us in faithful service to the One who brought us here.

Will you join me in honoring my beloved wife, Brenda Dobbs.

Through every deep water. Through every river of woe. He has not once let us go.

And so, we come to the end of this address where every address, every sermon, every episcopate, every life of faithful service must end: not with our own strength, **but with our need of His**.

I close, not with a strategy, but with the deepest desire of my heart for this Anglican Diocese of the Living Word and for every one of you.

My desire is for us to be a people upon whom Almighty God has built His Church — built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone. I want us to be joined together in unity of spirit and in the bond of peace — a holy temple, acceptable to God, not because of anything we have achieved, but because of everything He has given.

My desire is that the abundance of His grace would rest upon this diocese, that with one heart we would desire the health and increase of His holy Church, and with one voice profess the faith once delivered to the saints. I want Him to defend from the sins of heresy and schism, not merely the dramatic heresies that make headlines, but the quiet, creeping compromises that erode conviction from within.

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It is my prayer that the course of this world would be so peaceably ordered by His governance that His Church may joyfully serve Him in all godliness and faithfully walk in the ways of truth and peace. And I want this, above all else, I want this: that on the Day of Judgment, every man, woman, and child in this diocese, every planter and every confirmand, every founder and every newcomer, every bishop and every lay person who has ever sat in one of our pews, **I want us all to be numbered with His saints in glory everlasting.**

This is the faith we hold. Ancient, tested, beautiful, sufficient. This is the Church we serve, one, holy, apostolic, Reformed, evangelical, and alive. This is the Lord who has led us the whole way, who led us through the wilderness, who set stones before we knew we needed them, who dried up the waters of the Jordan and brought us to this place with one foundation that no storm can shake.

Not a tradition, however beautiful. Not a confession, however true. Not a Prayer Book, however magnificent. Not a Diocese, however faithful. Not a bishop, however committed, but a person!

Jesus Christ — And He will hold. He has always held. Through the deep waters and the rivers of woe. Through the fire and the flood. He has held. He holds now. And He will hold when we are gone and those who come after us look at the stones we have set and ask: what do these mean? And the answer will be the: *The Lord led us. The Lord provided. The Lord will never fail us.*

Through Jesus Christ our Lord, the gracious Shepherd and Bishop of our souls.