

184<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Missouri

Report to Convention by The Reverend Canon Doris Westfall

Canon to the Ordinary

November 3-4, 2022

Rt Rev. Dr. Sir, Chancellor Burroughs, people and clergy of the Diocese of Missouri,

2023 has been a busy, challenging, and exciting year for the Diocese of Missouri. I would like to recap some of the notable achievements and events that reflect the life of the diocese and how the people of the diocese have told the story of Jesus in our midst here in the heartland. This is not a complete list of all that has happened but rather a highlight of some of the work of ministry around the diocese.

Sunday visitations continue, of course. On many visitations, all orders of ministry are present and visible to the congregations. We have welcomed new clergy into our midst, said goodbye to others, and mourn the passing of two others. In the last year we have celebrated the ordinations of Erin Pickersgill, Jessica Wachter, Mtipe Koganni, Ryan Missal and Garron Daniels to the priesthood and the Rev. Loretta Go, David Luckes, and Aaron Rogers to the diaconate, we said goodbye to Jon Stratton and Mike Angell, and we mourn the passing of Al Jewson and Jan O'Neil.

From the moment we are born to the moment of our deaths, we are in transition. That is true for us as humans and true for us as a diocese. Grace-Kirkwood, Trinity-CWE, Trinity-Hannibal, Holy Communion-University City, St. Mark's-St. Louis, St. Paul's-Sikeston, Christ Church-Cape Girardeau, and Christ Church-Rolla are all in some phase or some type of transition. Grace African Christian Connections has celebrated its first anniversary and is now meeting at St. Barnabas-Florissant with the Rev. Mtipe Koganni at its helm. The Journey-a ministry community in the old St. Alban's building in Fulton, began meeting with the Rev. Jessica Wachter as the ministry developer. The merger between St. Luke's and Good Shepherd became final and Hope Church was the new name chosen by the congregations for their new shared life. Hope was officially dedicated on July 22<sup>nd</sup> 2023. Rockwell House had some extensive and long overdue renovations done and their outside chapel area was dedicated on September 17<sup>th</sup>, 2023. If you are in the neighborhood, stop by. It is stunning.

The facilities audits have continued and we thank Rick, MJ, Alex and Ray of Kuhn Construction for all their help in this ongoing and very important work to safe guard the assets of the diocese. We are three-quarters done with the audits and have sent the reports to the facilities committee of the Diocesan Council to look them over and see what financial impact these needs may have on the parishes and diocesan budget in the years to come.

A task force on use of the Grace Hill Campus led by Clark Davis of St. Peter's-Ladue and including lay, clergy and social service providers has been working diligently to discern how this

property can best be used to serve the needs of our neighbors in Old North. For the time being, we have an agreement with St. Patrick's Center for emergency shelter to assess and refer the unhoused served by St. Patrick's Center. This arrangement seems to be working well and there have been few problems.

The diocese was invited to join a new initiative developed by the Episcopal Church Foundation. The Diocese of Missouri, along with the Diocese of West Tennessee, Diocese of the Rio Grande, and Diocese of Oregon have been involved in the Diocesan Vitality Initiative (known as DVI). This initiative aims to "identify adaptive challenges and create processes for renewal, redevelopment, and revitalization." As we are ahead of the curve in the development of this with the Requiem and Renaissance program, our role will change from one of pilot diocese in DVI to one of mentorship to the other dioceses.

In looking forward through 2024, we are very actively planning for the I Love To Tell The Story Revival to be held in March. This evening of fellowship, song, and inspiration is a time for all of us to come together to celebrate our shared life and the future of the Diocese of Missouri.

We will continue with additional cohorts of the Requiem or Renaissance Program. Several dioceses and even the Anglican Church of Canada have contacted Canon Whitney Rice to ask about how the program can be initiated in and adapted to their particular context.

As we find ourselves in an historic priest shortage as well as dealing with the tremendous demographic and cultural shifts of our time, we must look to other ways of meeting the needs of the everyday life of our congregations. We hope to develop a Mutual Ministry model for use in our smaller congregations. In collaboration with the Bishop Kemper School for Ministry, congregational cohorts will train together in the areas of formation, administration, pastoral care, and liturgy. A priest, acting as a sacramentalist, will be with the congregation once a month to celebrate the Eucharist and perform any necessary sacramental acts. Adhering to the adage, "Everything old is new again," this new model is actually an old model and is in keeping with our early missionary roots.

Creative expressions in ministry and worship that are true to our tradition, theology, and beliefs will help us meet the needs of those who do not yet know about Jesus or are seeking a deeper knowledge of a faith-filled life. Ministry initiatives such as The Journey in Fulton, Grace African Christians Connection in Florissant, and Grace Gathering in University City, a ministry for neuro-diverse individuals, show the diocese's commitment to inclusivity and addressing the issues that may keep people from participating in the worship life of a community.

Times are challenging and will continue to be so, but they are also exciting. We are meeting the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century church with faith in Jesus, compassion for our neighbors, prayer for our communities, while also taking action on issues of injustice and inequity. In short, we are being the Church—we are being the hands, heart, and feet of Jesus in Missouri and beyond.

To God goes all the glory.