

Diocesan Office Report to 2014 Convention

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Canon to the Ordinary/Transition Ministry Officer/Chief of Staff

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DIOCESAN OFFICE

In the year since the 31st Diocesan Convention in November 2013, Bishop High and the diocesan staff have dedicated themselves to the five key ministries that are uniquely those of an Episcopal diocese:

- Visioning of God's mission and how that mission is lived out in this region
- Coordination of God's mission in this region, particularly as related to things that flow from/impact all Episcopalians and future Episcopalians in this region
- Relationship with others in the Episcopal church and Anglican communion
- Leadership development and nurture
- Support to congregations and clergy in the various tasks that create and sustain a healthy environment conducive to the flourishing of ministry (administration, finance, communication, facilitation, personnel, property, litigation, etc.)

The Diocese exists primarily to support the work of God as manifest in congregations throughout these 24 counties in North Central Texas. This was a year of robust activity – and great success in mission and ministry – in our diocese. The fruit of our efforts together is revealed most notably in this single fact: each and every one of our 22 congregations made significant strides in health and/or growth this year! For example, St. Stephen's in Hurst and The Episcopal Church in Hamilton County (St. Mary's) moved into new worship spaces, after having worshipped in alternative spaces since the reorganization of the diocese. Seven of our congregations concluded their participation in Episcopal Church Building Fund's "Recasting Our Assets." As a result of a year's work of learning, praying, and reaching out into their communities, St. Elisabeth and Christ the King started worshipping together at St. Elisabeth, and the three congregations in Wichita Falls (All Saints', Good Shepherd, and St. Stephen's) started worshipping "Under One Roof" at St. Stephen's. All Saints', Fort Worth, completed construction of the Gray House in January and continued construction of their school in Kenya. St. Andrew's, Fort Worth, started having Sunday morning services in space donated by University Christian Church. These are just some examples of how God has brought the increase to the fields where we have, as Christ's followers, faithfully labored these past years.

Many of our congregations have undergone clergy transitions in the past year. This is also a sign of God stirring in our midst. Though leadership transitions always bring attendant stress, they also provide opportunity to ask deep questions about how best to move forward together in God's mission. Following is a list of clergy who have made leadership transitions in/with their congregations this past year:

- The Rev. ClayOla Gitane, resigned as priest-in-charge of St. Francis, Willow Park, and Christ the King, Fort Worth
- The Rev. Vernon Gotcher, retired again after serving at St. Stephen's, Hurst
- Deacon Janet Nocher, retired as deacon from Trinity, Fort Worth
- The Rev. John Payne, retired again after serving St. Stephen's, Wichita Falls

- The Rev. Susan Slaughter, retired as rector of St. Luke's in the Meadow, Fort Worth
- The Rev. Michael Wallens concluded his term as interim rector of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, Keller
- The Rev. Melanie Wright, resigned as priest-in-charge of St. Alban's, Arlington

Appointments

The Rev. Norma Barr is serving as interim priest-in-charge, St. Alban's, Arlington

The Rev. Amy Haynie was elected priest-in-charge, Episcopal Church of Wichita Falls

The Rev. Karen Calafat was elected priest-in-charge, St. Luke's in the Meadow, Fort Worth

St. Martin-in-the-Fields, Keller, has been in search this past year and will (we trust!) soon announce that a Rector has been elected

In addition, we have welcomed a number of other Episcopal clergy to the diocese of Fort Worth:

- The Rev. Dr. Wilda Gafney, professor of Biblical Studies at Brite Divinity School
- The Rev. Robert Gross, retired, from the Diocese of Rio Grande
- The Rev. Lynn Lundelius, retired, from the Diocese of Washington, DC
- The Rev. Ron Pogue, retired, from the Diocese of Texas

In the midst of all this lively ministry activity, the diocesan office reorganized in order to better serve the needs of our ever-changing diocese. We said farewell to two devoted members of our staff. Ms. Demi Prentiss, who served here since January 2010 as ministry developer, worked tirelessly to help with the reconstitution of the diocesan office following the events of 2008/2009, and we are so grateful for her countless contributions. Ms. Eleanor Doty, who served as administrative assistant, offered gracious hospitality to all who called or came to the diocesan office, and we are thankful for her presence with us. The Rev. Amy Haynie, who served as part-time In-Reach Coordinator, helped the In-Reach Team wrap up their work and concluded her ministry on staff. We are grateful for the yeoman's work she and her team did in preparation for the successful settlement of the continuing litigation.

Two people joined the diocesan staff: Ms. Michele King came on board as Administrative Assistant/Assistant to the bishop, and Deacon Tracie Middleton began serving as Ministry Support and Communications Officer. There were other staffing changes, as well. Ms. Adriana Cline, Assistant for Finance, also took on responsibility for coordination of our ACS database. In the midst of all this, one thing that did not change is the ever-faithful dedication of our diocesan treasurer, Mr. Bob Hicks. Though he is not a paid staffer, he dedicates abundant time to ensuring that the finances of our diocese are well managed. The efforts of these four people – and our communications team – are foundational to the success of not only the diocesan office, but also our ministries throughout the diocese.

Our arrangements with the contractors responsible for all of our communications efforts were examined and renegotiated to maximize our ability to reach out in all formats – web-based and print. The efforts of our contractors have been unflagging, and we are grateful for how their work helps our light to shine across these 24 counties of North Central Texas – and far beyond! A contract with Ms. Susan Kleinwechter, who assists particularly with web and social media, was revised and renewed. We said farewell to communications contractors Adam and Nikki Wood, who moved to California so that Nikki could start seminary, and we wish them much success in their new callings.

At the 2013 diocesan convention, Bishop High announced a new print newsletter, Common Call, which has been warmly received and successfully distributed by mail and through congregations six times this past year. This year, a new blog “Beauty and Bravery: Life as Christians in the Episcopal Diocese of Fort Worth” will be announced, and this will be the latest tool for getting God’s good news out in our diocese.

Strides were also made in many other areas of our ministry together throughout the diocese. A summary of efforts and accomplishments over the past year is as follows:

PROGRAMS

Increased ministry capacity of congregations throughout the diocese through coordination of excellent resources

- Episcopal Church Building Fund – four on-site visits serving seven congregations
- Healthy Congregations – two two-day events with over 80 unique individuals attending all/part of these sessions

ADMINISTRATION

Provided continuing administrative support for ministries of congregations and the diocese

- Financial/accounting support
- Insurance/pension support
- Records/reporting support
- Litigation support

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

Supported enhanced functioning and focus of this body

- Helped activate and guide workgroups
- Outlined and implemented grant process to support congregational ministries
- Assisted deaneries and workgroups in enhanced partnership and efficiency
- Coordinated adoption of bylaws

CLERGY SUPPORT

Increased support to clergy in order to help sustain and grow them and increase their effectiveness in ministry

- Coordinated participation in Clergy Conference in Diocese of Texas
- Coordinated Wellness Workshop (resources and speakers provided by Church Pension Group)
- Facilitated meeting of Bishop High with retired clergy and their spouses
- Created Common Call Clergy Group
 - Constructed Facebook page
 - Supported five gatherings with Bishop High

EVENTS

Facilitated successful diocesan-wide events

- Diocesan Convention
- 5th Anniversary of the Re-organization of the diocese – February 2014

PROJECTS

Increased professional manner and functioning of the diocese

- Overhauled Safeguarding Manual and Training process
- Created diocesan Lay Employees Manual
- Overhauled and implemented contract process with independent contractors

EVANGELISTIC/ENTREPRENEURIAL EFFORTS

Provided support, facilitation and guidance for key ministry initiatives

- Church planting
- Capital campaign exploration
- Hispanic ministry

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

- Partnerships built and deepened around the region, including
 - Tarrant Churches Together
 - Brite Divinity School
 - Diocese of Texas
 - Iona School
 - Seminary of the Southwest
 - Sewanee School of Theology

I consider it a great privilege to serve our Lord in this place and time, under the leadership of Bishop High and in partnership with all the good people of the Episcopal Diocese of Fort Worth. Please know my gratitude for and joy in the powerful ministry we do together.

Faithfully in Christ,

The Rev. Canon Janet Waggoner

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