



# The Line

Diocese of the West



July/August 2015 Vol. II Issue 5

Bishop Win Mott: [bpwinmott@gmail.com](mailto:bpwinmott@gmail.com)  
 DOW Assistant: Cherie Salmon-[dowbishopassistant@gmail.com](mailto:dowbishopassistant@gmail.com)  
 Editor: Susan Peterson - [smprrp@sbcglobal.net](mailto:smprrp@sbcglobal.net)

## Hello Brothers and Sisters in Christ

I pray this finds you all in good health. A very big thank you to Mimi and Father Ron Longero for hosting this year's Synod. A very heartfelt thanks and appreciation for all the hard work done by the members of Christ's Church of the Sierra. You did an outstanding job. It was great meeting some of you for the first time, and seeing those of you we already know. It reminds us how much we are family, even though great distance separates us. For those of you who were not able to attend, the Bishop's letter will fill you in on the highlights of the meeting.

## The Bishop's Corner

It was a well attended synod (best attendance ever). The people of Christ Church of the Sierra worked hard and successfully to host the event, and made it a quality occasion. We owe them a big thank you! The theme of the synod was on doing mission in small congregations, led ably by Bishop William Ilgenfritz of the Missionary Diocese of All Saints. It is clear that each one of our sixteen parishes will either live or die in the next few years, depending on what they do with the information received in Reno.



There was substantial discussion on the future of the Diocese after my retirement next summer. Various options were reviewed, such as, remaining a diocese as we now are, becoming a convocation within another diocese, simply dissolving with parishes finding an appropriate diocese with which to affiliate on an individual basis. The Standing Committee was directed by the Synod to structure a way forward to a decision on this in the next three months, and they will be meeting in September to achieve this. In ACNA, the retirement of the bishop triggers



## The Bishop's Corner (continued)

a “sustainability study” to ascertain if a diocese should continue, as the ACNA bishops are charged with electing a new bishop based on a nomination from the diocese, and can decline to do so if they see the diocese as not viable.

While it is possible to resent this provision, it does force us to do our own analysis. Our Diocese is unique within ACNA, and many of us are aware of the community among us which has bonded together, and which would be missed sorely if it were no longer possible. Yet it is also true that, while half of our congregations support the Diocese financially in a manner ranging from reasonable to generous, half give no money at all or a very token amount, and have failed to contribute for many years. This total lack of responsibility is the dark side of the community bonds the rest of us share, and would make any observer (including those charged with deciding if we should be a diocese) question the commitment involved. This is especially true since we are a Diocese entirely composed of small congregations, so it is not that a few strong parishes can pull the others along. Thus, much of the real decision will depend on whether or not all the parishes express a commitment to the Diocese. And in all this, it is important to remember that the priority is to be the Body of Christ regardless, and we are called to clearly state the Gospel truth of the grace and love of God to all around us. We should not fixate on questions of diocesan structure in lieu of this truth. The most basic importance of the synod was not the discussion on the

diocesan future, but rather on doing mission. We will all continue whether there is a diocese or not, as will the command to go into all the world and make disciples.

Currently, all vacancies for parish rector are filled, and all but three have at least one deacon. The importance of the diaconate is particularly emphasized in our Diocese, and we continue to have candidates come forward for diaconal ordination. I do note some uncertainty regarding the liturgical role of the deacon. The deacon serves as the leader of the people in worship, whereas the priest presides. Thus, for example, in the Eucharist the deacon speaks to the people, the priest leads the people in speaking to God, and in presiding at the Table for communion. This means the deacon's part in the Eucharist is as follows: 1) The Summary of the Law; 2) The Reading of the Gospel; 3) On occasion, the sermon; 4) The Prayer of the Church (this is best in litany form, where the deacon can bid the people's prayers); 5) The Exhortation to Confess (“Ye who do truly and earnestly”); 6) The Comfortable Words; 7) The Administration of the Chalice; 8) The Dismissal (“Let us bless the Lord” or similar after the recessional hymn).

This pattern is substantially the same, even if the 1928 or REC prayerbooks are not used. In a number of our parishes, various persons read the other lessons and bring forward the bread and wine at the offering, both of which are practices to be commended to all.



## The Bishop's Corner (continued)

A week or so after the synod, Canon Allan Graves, Katy and Father Brian Foos and myself attended the Catholic Congress for Anglicans in Ft. Worth. It was an inspiring event which was last held in 1922, so it was time. The quality of the papers presented and of the worship was excellent, and it was good to see a demographic as much of “millennials” as of the older generation. It would appear that many Anglo-Catholic parishes have found a way to communicate the ancient faith to a younger generation. AnglicanTV recorded much of the proceedings (go to youtube.com and search for anglicanTV). I would especially commend the presentations of Bishops Michael Nazir-Ali and Ray Sutton.

There are segments of the Anglican Church which are currently having a discussion about whether or not children should be baptized if the parents do not conform to the standards set for Christian living. For those of us who believe God acts in the sacrament of baptism (that is why it is a sacrament and not simply an ordinance or ceremony), the lack of worthiness of the parents is absolutely never an excuse to refuse baptism to a child of God. First, to deny a child the grace and forgiveness of God in baptism, entrance into the family of the Body of Christ and adoption as His child, is an horrendous act of child abuse. Second, baptism never depends on the worthiness of either the baptismal candidate nor his or her parents or godparents, and it is a variation on the Donatist heresy condemned long ago by the Church to make it conditional upon worthiness. Third, throwing the first stone is risky. Christians often make some sins more

trendy than others. If worthiness is a condition of baptism, it is important to remember that some sins are implicitly condoned in many congregations where these discussions happen. Avarice, greed, oppression of or indifference to the poor and needy, feuds, factions, not loving our neighbor as ourselves, gossip and false witness, indifference to the missionary mandate placed on all Christians, being unrepentant about anger, unchristian treatment of family, are all common examples of this found in many congregations. Add to this Jesus' comment that it would be better to be drowned deliberately in the sea than to cause a child to sin (Matt. 18:6), perhaps we can gain some perspective on this. The fact is that all parents and godparents are sinners and there are no respectable sins, despite the impression one gets sometimes in congregations. To be an obstacle for any reason between God and a little child, is clearly serious sin in itself. God will never turn his back on a little child. We shouldn't either.

Finally, and most tragically, on behalf of the Diocesan community, I would like to extend our loving sympathy to Deacon Michael and Marie Odell of Trinity Church, Mt. Vernon, on the loss of their daughter. Words cannot make the pain go away. Only the Resurrection is of help. “I am the resurrection and the life” is Jesus' promise. In that sure and certain hope, we can offer comfort.

Your bishop,  
+Win



## Parish News

A few photos from the Synod:



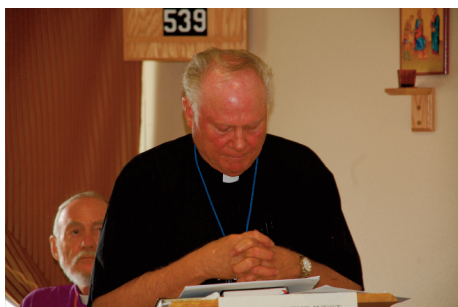
Bishops Stephen Scarlett, William Ilgenfritz, Royal Grote and our own Win Mott



Listening to an informative training session



Beautiful singing by Father Brian Foos and students from the St Andrews Academy



Deacon Henry Roark

As you have probably already noticed, I have chosen a name for our newsletter. I would welcome suggestions and would be happy to use another, if you would like. The Line was chosen for a couple of reasons. The name implies a line of communication between all of us, and as a fishing line, reminds us what Jesus told his apostles, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." (Matthew 4:18-19)



Below is a little history on the Christian symbol of the fish, which I have also chosen to use in our newsletter. Hope you find it as interesting as I did.

### What is the origin of the Christian fish symbol?

The Greek word for fish is "ichthys." As early as the first century, Christians made an acrostic from this word: Iesus Christos Theou Yios Soter, i.e. Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior. The fish has plenty of other theological overtones as well, for Christ fed the 5,000 with 2 fishes and 5 loaves (a meal recapitulated in Christian love-feasts) and called his disciples "fishers of men." Water baptism, practiced by immersion in the early church, created a parallel between fish and converts. Second-century theologian Tertullian put it this way: "we, little fishes, after the image of our Ichthys, Jesus Christ, are born in the water."



## Parish News (continued)

Greeks, Romans, and many other pagans used the fish symbol before Christians. Hence the fish, unlike, say, the cross, attracted little suspicion, making it a perfect secret symbol for persecuted believers. When threatened by Romans in the first centuries after Christ, Christians used the fish mark meeting places and tombs, or to distinguish friends from foes. According to one ancient story, when a Christian met a stranger in the road, the Christian sometimes drew one arc of the simple fish outline in the dirt. If the stranger drew the other arc, both believers knew they were in good company. Current bumper-sticker and business-card uses of the fish hearken back to this practice.

Critics of the fish symbol either decry it as tacky tokenism or point out that the fish still carries baggage from the days when pagans used it to represent fertility or, more specifically, the female reproductive organs. Though I agree that ichthys symbols in phone-book ads seem to commercialize faith, I don't find the pagan argument compelling. No symbol means the same thing to all people at all times. That early Christians succeeded in transforming an already powerful symbol proves their interpretive creativity, not their ignorance or a tendency to syncretism.

Elesha Coffman

Copyright ©2001 by the author or Christianity Today/Christian History magazine.



## The Point

At the Synod in Reno, Nevada, this summer, one of the clergy present mentioned that he often provides an item which is needed at his church without asking for repayment. To this Bishop Grote responded, "What's your point? We all do that." And, of course, he's right. I'm sure nearly 100 percent of the DOW Newsletter's readership have simply bought an extra package of toilet tissue for the church's restrooms or made a similar purchase just because you saw a need you could meet. God bless you for your generosity!

But, and this is important: It is nearly impossible to create an operating budget when one lacks the data to determine one's expenses. I had to have this point explained to me by our Vestry Treasurer. She said that the reason why in-kind donations to the church need to be tallied is because the Vestry needs to plan for expenses when they meet to draft the annual budget. Yes, we have eternal life through faith in Christ our Savior, but He may call us to live part of that life in another part of the country or take us to be with Him in heaven, and yet the parish church will still have a recurring need for that item you've been supplying all these years, even after you are no longer sitting in the pews.

Here is the way we at St. Luke's Chapel in the Hills have found to help our Vestry. I am particularly prone to buying paper for the Chapel's copier, so I will use one of my own in-kind offerings as an illustration. One week I bought a case of paper for the Chapel, so I typed up a letter with my name and address (the Treasurer insists), the item I had purchased (10-ream case of white letter-sized paper), the



## Parish News (continued)

amount I had spent (\$57.29), and the purpose for which that item would be used (church office supplies), and I noted that this was an in-kind offering. Then I printed this letter and stapled my receipt to the back. I folded my letter so it would fit in the offertory basin, and then put it and my weekly offering for God's kingdom in the basin when it came to where I was sitting on Sunday morning.

You will notice from this that I still make in-kind donations, and the good people of the Chapel still use these gifts thankfully. The only difference between now and before is, that I now provide information which the Vestry can use to draft a more accurate annual operating budget. Having the Chapel's financial house in order made it easier for our Vestry to quickly and confidently fulfill the assignment of the Synod to inform the Standing Committee of the Chapel's financial commitment to the Diocese of the West for the next twelve months.

It took a while to get all the quiet need-meeters in our parish to begin letting the Treasurer know of their in-kind offerings (she made several announcements in the bulletin and newsletter), but look at how this simple change in our individual behavior as givers benefitted an ever-expanding portion of God's Church. We at the Chapel provide necessary data when we give offerings of goods, our Vestry uses that data to benefit our parish, our parish is then able to benefit our diocese, and our diocese is able to thrive and expand its work for God.

– *Kim Vogel*

Thank you Kim for the very useful information.



## Prayer Requests

Dear Lord, forgive us when we fail to recognize your hand in our lives. Be patient with us when we focus on our own small plans and fail to see your grand design for our lives. Increase our faith so that we see only your daily love and care, amen.

Pray for the victims and families of the recent theater shooting.

Pray for the firefighters and families in the path of the many fires on the west coast.

Keep Deacon Michael and Marie Odell in your prayers, that God will comfort them as they mourn the loss of their daughter.

Pray for our diocese as we seek a way forward.

## Hint of Humor



WHY DON'T YOU STOP WONDERING WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE WORLD AND READ THE MANUAL

## Final Note:

Please send in your parish articles, photos and anything else you might think would be interesting for the newsletter. We are in dire need, and would love to spotlight your parish.

