



Carpe Diem

Anglicans For Life's Quarterly Newsletter



FEBRUARY 2023

The Least of These

Bishop Eric Vawter Menees, Diocese of San Joaquin

Editor's Note: This is the text of the sermon preached by The Rt. Rev. Eric V. Menees at the Anglican Prayer & Worship Service held Friday morning as part of the Life SUMMIT events prior to the March for Life. The Gospel reading was Matthew 25:31-46

There is no question that this year's March for Life is historic, as it is the first national event since the Dobbs decision vacated the Roe v. Wade decision last summer.

Of course, that did not end abortions throughout the country, but it did make some headway! While some states restricted or ended access to abortion, others like California are actively recruiting across state lines to encourage women to travel to their state, to end their pregnancy. What the Dobbs decision did was put the question of legalized abortions back to the hands of the individual states. While I am thrilled with the decision, I have to say that I find abhorrent the idea that a state, any state could legalize the taking of an innocent life. I know it grieves the very heart of God, but it doesn't surprise Him.

Over the past seventy years, my generation, the Boomer Generation, has moved from a Christian ethic which seeks the good of the other, to now focusing on the good of the self. We have accepted the lie and eaten the forbidden fruit in the false belief that we can be like God. It's not simply a question of knowing good and evil, it is the false belief that "I am the master of my life and death, my

identity, my happiness and my well-being." It is the false idea that "I have no duty to God, a higher power, a greater good, or ultimately another person because that power and goodness lies within me." Therefore, the only duty I have is to myself.

That is a LIE of the devil and on the Last Day when the trumpet sounds, we will stand before the Lord who will ask us, "What did you do for the least of these my brothers?"

Let's do a little bible study shall we? I've chosen Matthew 25 as my text for this morning's worship. This choice may seem a little counterintuitive, but I hope by the end it will make sense.

Allow me to set the scene for the reading of the Gospel.

Jesus has made his grand entrance into Jerusalem drawing the anger and jealousy of both the Romans who saw that he was received by the people as a victorious king, and the Jewish authorities who witnessed the crowds receiving Jesus like a Messiah. People laid down their palms and cried out "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" (Mt: 21:9) quoting and fulfilling Psalm 118.

Interestingly, Jesus doesn't act in the expected manner of a Messiah or a King. He goes directly to the Temple and overturns the tables of the Money Changers, which angered a lot of people. And then,

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Pictured left to right: Canon Georgette Forney, Archbishop Foley Beach, Bishop John Guernsey, Bishop Eric Menees, Bishop Steven Tighe

The First Ever Post-Roe Life SUMMIT

Canon Georgette Forney, AFL President



"Welcome everyone to the first ever post Roe Life SUMMIT!"

As I spoke these words at the beginning of this year's SUMMIT, I was once again overcome with the miracle that happened last June, when 49+ years of legal abortion came to an end in the United States. And while abortion legislation is now in the hands of each state legislature, we can celebrate the 14 states that have banned or greatly limited abortion in favor of protecting the lives of babies and moms.

It was a great way to kick off our annual SUMMIT. The joy that is felt when a life is saved seemed to permeate the air the rest of the day.

Every speaker shared a message designed to educate, inspire, and equip attendees to go back to their church and develop outreach and ministry to those struggling with life and death issues. This is the main purpose for the SUMMIT, as AFL's goal is to see every believer in every church doing one thing everyday to bear witness to the sacredness of life.

All of the SUMMIT presentations give attendees examples of how the Sanctity of Life is threatened everyday in our culture.

Why do we do this? As a biblically based ministry that addresses life and death issues, Anglicans For Life exists to equip you so you can educate others, and

establish ministry outreach on life topics, ultimately employing Scripture to advocate for the value of every life made in God's image! As your Church seeks to bear witness to the sacredness of life in both word and deed, we want to be your go-to resource. This is especially important now that we live in a post-Roe world!

We, as a church, must see the changes in abortion access as an opportunity for ministry. I firmly believe fewer women will seek abortions now that it is no longer legal nationwide. As long as something is legal, even if it feels wrong, people will see it as an acceptable choice. Now, however, with many states banning abortion or limiting it, those who would have turned to abortion to end their unplanned pregnancy will need the support and resources God's people can provide.

The overturning of *Roe* is an opportunity for us to show the world what the church can do for life!



Above: Archbishop Foley Beach made a surprise visit at ySUMMIT



18
Dioceses participated.



366
Students and adults participated in Life SUMMIT events.



5
Countries represented (USA, Canada, Kenya, Nigeria, UK).



23
States were represented.



13
Scholarships were awarded.



120
Individuals attended virtually (approximately).



12
Speakers shared their expertise.

Ultrasound Proves What God Always Knew to be True

Sammie Gallo, AFL Outreach Coordinator



All Saints' Woodbridge Youth Group participated virtually in the ySUMMIT 2023 and even went a step further to show the teenagers in their youth groups how they can personally get involved in the pro-life movement in their own communities. Being pro-life is not only a soul conviction, but one that should push us to act humbly and peacefully for the sake of justice and mercy.

At the end of the March for Life weekend, the group toured a local pregnancy center, Life First Center. One of the student's moms works at the pregnancy center as an ultrasound technician – and even better, their youth leader's wife is expecting! The students were able to witness a real ultrasound, something that has proven time and time again to be so powerful. Let's explore why.

It actually makes perfect sense to be pro-science and pro-life – it's a lie that the two contradict. For the past 40-something years, the pro-life message has focused on the fetus being a life, and a human life worthy of all the rights the rest of us have. While that has been more of an abstract concept previously, over the last decade or so, men and women can now see their baby sucking it's thumb at 18 weeks, smiling, and even clapping. All of these are human actions that point towards life.

These advancements fundamentally shift the moral intuition around abortion. New technology makes it easier to apprehend the humanity of a growing child and imagine a fetus as a creature with moral status. Over the last several decades, pro-life leaders have increasingly recognized this and rallied the power of scientific evidence to promote their cause. They have built new institutions to produce, track, and distribute scientifically crafted information on abortion. They hungrily follow new research in embryology. They celebrate progress in neonatology as a means to save young lives.

Before ultrasound technology, the womb was a mysterious place. It was dark and unsearchable, and then all of a sudden, it was like a flashlight showed us the reality of what's resting beyond our line of sight. A scientific advancement proved what God always knew to be true and intended to be.

Heidi Reichert, Communications Coordinator for DOMA, sees the value in the experience as a Christian and as a mom. She says: "These teens can now say to a friend in crisis 'I have been to a place that is safe and kind and can help you process all of your options.' And can take them there. It's no longer scary."

"Since teenagers tend to get advice from peers first, it's incredibly important to equip them with the information and knowledge needed to provide the best advice possible should a pregnancy crisis occur. By touring a local facility that offers free medical care (including an ultrasound) for expectant moms and dads, as well as prayer and emotional support, our youth can

now confidently and without hesitation suggest a caring and safe alternative to ending an unexpected pregnancy should one of their friends or schoolmates find themselves in that situation," she adds.

Jedd Trenum, the youth pastor at All Saints' Woodbridge says: "Our visit to the LifeFirst Center was a fun, informative, and a profound experience. More than a dozen teens in our church were given the opportunity to learn about the genuine care that pregnant women receive when they feel anxious, nervous, and scared. Additionally, they were able to witness a live ultrasound of my baby girl. It was incredible to see their eyes glued to the screen as they saw clearly defined feet, hands, ribs, and a beating heart. Truly, an experience they will not forget!"



Jedd's wife, Emily, shared with us some of her thoughts regarding the experience, "At first, I was a little apprehensive about the idea of a live ultrasound. However, after spending some time praying and reflecting on it, I knew it could be such a meaningful opportunity for the youth group. I remember how impactful it was for me and my husband to see my first ultrasound. There's no denying the life you're seeing before your eyes. Overall, it was a great experience. The nurse who provided the ultrasound created a warm and safe environment. I have no doubt the women who come to the pregnancy center experience that same warmth and care."

If you or someone you know is facing a crisis pregnancy, visit [OptionLine.org](https://www.optionline.org) to find a pro-life pregnancy center that will equip and encourage women to embrace their pregnancies and feel empowered – even in difficult circumstances. Youth leaders, if you're looking to share a similar experience with students in your youth group, you can use the OptionLine resource as a way to find a trusted center in your community.



Pictured left to right: Canon Georgette Forney, Brandon LeTourneau, Archbishop Foley Beach



Icon Dedication



On June 25, 2022, I received an email from a man named Brandon LeTourneau. He wrote "I am reaching out to you on behalf of the Seabury Society. We are an Anglican Devotional Society within the Anglican Church in North America. As you know, yesterday on the Nativity of St. John the Baptist, *Roe vs Wade* was overturned! In thanksgiving to God, we have commissioned an icon of St. John the Baptist leading children to Christ. The icon will be 18"x 14.5" containing both St. John the Baptist surrounded by children and our Lord. The icon will be written (painted) by the highly esteemed Roman Selivachov, Ukrainian Iconographer.

I am writing because we would like to dedicate this icon to Anglicans for Life. Would this be alright? We have reached out to the Provincial Pro-Cathedral (Christ Church) in Plano, Texas, asking if the icon could be stored there in a place where all may come and pray for the continued protection of the unborn."

To say that Anglicans For Life was surprised and humbled by this unexpected honor would be an understatement!

The Icon was delivered in December, and we decided to dedicate and bless it during the Prayer and Worship Service held in conjunction with the Life SUMMIT events in January. Brandon, his wife Marta, and their new baby boy, Augustine were able to attend the dedication and Brandon explained the symbolism behind the icon.

The Seabury Society seeks to help people within the Province deepen their understanding of Anglican devotion. Then when Roe vs. Wade was overturned, we wanted to give thanks, and do it in a way that expressed our devotion to God, so we commissioned this icon. It is St. John the Baptist, and he's leading little children to Christ.

Pictured below: The icon dedicated to AFL.

St. John the Baptist has long been a symbol for the cause for life. His story in Holy Scripture has been an icon for life for a couple of reasons. First, he is promised to his father, Zechariah, even before he is formed in the womb. He is a foretold gift to his parents. The prayer book tells us that children are gifts, and it has this interesting, and beautiful rubric that says, "Priests, when children are born, are obligated to give thanks despite the circumstance." It says, "Even through pain, we are obligated to give thanks because of the giftedness of children."



When the Blessed Virgin visits her cousin Elizabeth, St. John leaps for joy in his mother's womb. Again, he represents the sanctity of life. Not only is he consecrated to a particular ministry in the womb, but he also recognizes the holiness of Christ in his mother's womb.

The 1662 Book of Common Prayer tells us that holy baptism is sacred because Christ himself entered into it and sanctified the waters of baptism. Well, the same thing has happened with the womb. Christ has sanctified it, right? He did not abhor the Virgin's womb. And St. John, as his witness, recognizes that and leaps for joy. In the Lutheran tradition, they recognize that moment is when St. John received his prophetic call, through the voice of the Blessed Virgin.

Even St. John's death is life-affirming. St. John is beheaded for witnessing to the sanctity of the family, to biblical sexual ethics. It is because he accused the king of his sexual sin and not respecting the family as it had been revealed to Israel that he dies, and he gives his life for that cause.

Now, we are good apostolic Christians. We believe in the communion of saints. We believe that St. John is still praying for us and praying with us in this cause for life.

As you may know, Roe vs. Wade was overturned on St. John's Feast Day. So as good apostolic Christians, we are always looking back. We look at history and we see God's providential hand moving in history. When the whole Christian world saw what had happened on St. John's Day, we collectively said, "Hey, he's still praying for us!"

So why an icon? Well, Job tells us that we are to inquire of bygone ages, of what God has done in their day and the Psalmist says, "One generation declares the glory of the Lord to another."

The Great Litany which we traditionally pray three times a week, says, "Oh Lord, our fathers have declared unto us the noble works that thou didst in our days." Declaring the glory of God, the work that he has done in every generation is a Christian obligation.

Historically, this has been done through monuments. Our Father, Jacob, dreams that the heavens were open,

and he saw the ladder with the angels ascending and descending, he anointed the rock his head rested on and calls the place Bethel. He says, "Surely, this is the house of God." When Joshua leads us through the Jordan, he erects a monument. We're doing the same thing today. We are obligated to declare the glory of God in our generation for the next generation, and in the church, in Holy Scripture, this is done through tangible means. And so, we have commissioned this icon as an icon of this age.

I'll say one last thing, and it's about the Iconographer. He's Ukrainian Orthodox, and he's in Ukraine right now, in a war-torn country. And I would get calls from him saying, "Hey, I really wanted to work on this today. I had to move my family because of the bombing." But even he, despite his circumstances, despite the difficulty that he was encountering, still said, "No, this cause for life, that's worth working towards. Of course, I'm going to find time to work on this."

The Icon will be housed at the Provincial Pro-Cathedral as a symbol to all of what God has accomplished in our generation, of the things that are happening in our point in history, and how God has providentially led us to this moment, and we can look to it, and we can pray to Christ, and we can pray with St. John for the work that he has continued to do in this generation and in the future.

Archbishop Foley Beach then blessed the Icon and prayed that those who look upon it would be inspired to protect life, and to advocate for life.



Icon Notecards Available for Purchase

We have designed these blank notecards with the icon that was dedicated to AFL on the front of the card. The notecards come in packs of 5 notecards and 5 envelopes for \$5. Order yours online at <https://shopafl.org/products/afl-icon-notecards> or scan the QR code to the right.



IN MEMORY AND IN HONOR

Gordon and Gail Miller donated in memory of Gail's brother, David MacGregor Browd

Ann Weeks donated in memory of Rev. Robert O. Weeks.

The Very Rev. Canon John Park and Susan Delgado-Park donated in memory of The Rev. Robert and Jeanne Delgado.

Mrs. Lynn Schwaab donated in memory of her husband Richard Schwaab.

John and Marilyn Calhoun donated in honor of Clay, Lacy, William, and Mary.

Laura Smith donated in memory of Tracy O'Kelly Klatt.

Life SUMMIT 2023 in Photos

ySUMMIT Photos 1-5, Worship service: Photos 6-8,
March for Life: Photos 9-12, Life SUMMIT: Photos 13-17







Fifty Years Post-Roe, Anglicans and Episcopalians Diverge on Abortion

Jeff Walton



The Episcopal Church and Anglican Church in North America (ACNA) continue to diverge in social policy and theological belief surrounding bodily autonomy and the sanctity of human life.

Those viewpoints were on display January 20 as the ACNA hosted a service of morning prayer preceding the National March for Life. Two hours later, the Episcopal Church Office of Government Relations hosted a conference call titled "Roe 50 Years Later: Faith Communities' Response to a Post-Roe America." The latter discussion was framed to "explore where the pro-choice faith community goes from here."

"We at the Office of Government Relations are committed to restoring access to abortion for all in line with our mandate from the General Convention," explained Episcopal Church Policy Advisor Rushad Thomas, who moderated a panel featuring United Methodist Pastor Carolyn Davis and Glenn Northern of the National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW).

The Episcopal Church General Convention reasserted denominational support for legal abortion at any stage of pregnancy in July as lay and clergy deputies reacted against the Supreme Court ruling *Dobbs v Jackson* that returned abortion policy to states.

The perspective of the Anglican prayer service was diametrically opposed.

"Abortion grieves the heart of God," preached Diocese of San Joaquin Bishop Eric Menees before a service sponsored by Anglicans for Life and the ACNA Diocese of the Mid-Atlantic held at The Falls Church Anglican outside of Washington, D.C. The service followed a "ySUMMIT" on January 19 in which ACNA Archbishop Foley Beach addressed teenage participants engaged in Pro-Life ministry, and proceeded the annual Anglican Life Summit on January 21.

"We believed the lie and ate the forbidden fruit," Menees declared about abortion, tracing the termination of pregnancy to a "false idea that I have no duty to God."

Menees argued that American society has forgotten that all people are made in the image of God, but that God is sovereign and will have the last word.

Christians, Menees insisted, were not called to passivity on the issue of abortion but should "live out your Christian life" through an apostolic mission "sent out not only to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ but to embody the good news of Jesus Christ. Not simply to serve others, especially the least and the lost, but to love them. To love them means going beyond service: to love them means that you are willing to stand with them, to suffer with them, and desire more for them than you desire for yourself."

Prayer service participants heard testimony from Ashley Lawton as part of the Silent No More Awareness Campaign, a ministry "whereby Christians make the public aware of the devastation abortion brings to women and men. The campaign seeks to expose and heal the secrecy and silence surrounding the emotional and physical pain of abortion."

Lawton shared of the disclosure from her adopted mother that she had been conceived in an act of rape.

"It was a horrible and evil act – but I was innocent and did not deserve to die," Lawton told the congregation. "Every life deserves to be protected: we can love them both [mother and child]."

To those who argue for exceptions in abortion bans, Lawton declared, "I am that exception."

The Episcopal Church discussion centered upon reproductive rights, with Glenn Northern of the NCJW arguing that

"Freedom is just a mirage if one doesn't have bodily autonomy."

Northern insisted that abortion helps women to be economically empowered and that there is "no bad impact from having an abortion." He also sought to designate abortion not as an undesirable last resort or necessary evil, but as an unalloyed social good.

"We didn't do ourselves any favors when we bought into their [Pro-Life] framing of abortion as bad or immoral or something that someone would only do as a last resort," Northern argued. "Each time we name abortion and we don't use euphemisms, we help de-stigmatize it."

Ordained United Methodist minister Carolyn Davis encouraged the call participants to think of abortion as part of a larger slate of human rights.

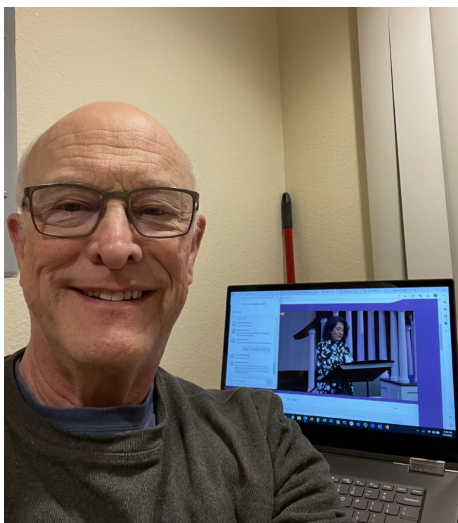
"Roe was always the floor, and there are a variety of mitigating factors that restrict access to abortion," Davis asserted, bemoaning the significant geographic distance some must travel in order to obtain abortions.

Davis pointed to others within the Episcopal Church who advocate abortion rights, naming Falls Church Episcopal Rector Burl Salmon as a chair of the Clergy Advocacy Board of the Planned Parenthood Federation of America.

Episcopalians and other Anglicans could, perhaps, find agreement in one point.

"Abortion doesn't live just outside of your church walls," Davis told the conference call, reporting that about one in three churchgoing women will have an abortion. "People who have had abortion are in your pews."

The Anglican service concluded with Archbishop Beach blessing a sanctity of life icon crafted by a Ukrainian Orthodox artist. Portraying St. John the Baptist leading children to Jesus Christ, the icon will be featured at Christ Church Cathedral in Plano, Texas, the denomination's provincial cathedral.



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The Least of These (Cont.)

Bishop Eric Vawter Menees, Diocese of San Joaquin



when challenged, Jesus tells the people that they need to pay their taxes saying, "Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." (Mt. 22:21)

He then begins talking about the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple saying, "You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down." (Mt. 24:2)

And from there he begins to tell everyone who will listen not only what the signs of the end of the ages will be -- but upon what God's judgment will be based upon. Spoiler alert -- it's not about how well you know Scripture, or how religious you are, or how good and nice you are. It's not about earning your way into heaven! It's about the attitude of your heart and the inclination of your mind.

Jesus makes this clear in what we now refer to as the Great Commandment. "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself." (Mt. 22:37-39)

Earlier in Matthew 25, Jesus gives us two parables. The first parable is the Ten Virgins that teaches that we are to be attentive and watchful, the way that the wise Virgins waited for the coming of the bridegroom.

The second parable is that of the Talents which basically says, "God has given you all these things - how have you used them to HIS benefit and glory?"

The third parable which was featured in our reading is that of the Final Judgment. The Separation of the Sheep and Goats parable tells us that it's about the inclination of our heart towards "the least of these my brothers," the prisoner and immigrant, the sick and alone, the hungry, and the poor.

Jesus could have easily added the women who are pregnant and afraid, to his list of the "least of these."

Which leads to the question; how are we treating that mother and child? Could there

be a more vulnerable, innocent, defenseless creature than a child in his mother's womb? As individuals and the Church, what is the attitude of our heart and the inclination of our mind toward a pregnant woman and the child in her womb? Toward a mother who believes she has to choose between the child and her parents, or the father, or school, or a job or her own fears about being a parent. Believing falsely that she has no options.

What is the attitude of our heart toward an elderly man or woman with dementia, or someone dying of heart disease, or cancer who is now given the "option" of physician assisted suicide which in many states is a euphemism for "a dignified death."

Friends, somehow as a society we have forgotten that all people are "created in the image of God." (Genesis 1:26-27) And therefore are due every right, protection and dignity from the moment of conception to the moment of natural death. We have forgotten that each and every human being is "fearfully and wonderfully made" just as we prayed in Psalm 139.

We have mistakenly placed ourselves, our desires, our comforts first, even telling ourselves that I am the least, so I deserve these things. We rationalize away any kernel of doubt or guilt -- defiantly saying, "It's my body, my choice." Or, "what kind of quality of life would they have anyway?" Because, of course, we see ourselves, and not God, as the determiners of what "quality of life" means.

Now, lest you be discouraged by what I've just shared, take heart. I'm not being cynical -- just honest. And as Christians, we are never without HOPE.

Remember that our hope is not in the political processes as important as that is. And as important as our participation in it is, our hope is not in the Republican or the Democratic Party or the Libertarians, nor is our hope in any elected official. Trust me, they will disappoint you. They are made up of fallen and sinful creatures in need of a savior just like you and me.

Friends, our hope is in Jesus Christ, in Him alone, He is the King of kings and Lord of

lords. As we hear in Revelation, chapter 22, He is the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.

He is the one who said, "Let there be light, and there was light." (Genesis 1:3) He is the one who breathed life into Adam's lifeless lungs. He is the one who gave you and me life. And He is the one who offered himself as the "perfect sacrifice for our sins." He remains sovereign and WILL have the last word!

Now, please don't think that I am advocating some sort of Christian passivity. Just the opposite, I am arguing for active engagement in this battle on two fronts.

First, the Spiritual front -- remembering that first and foremost this is a battle of "against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places," as St. Paul tells us in Ephesians 6:12

So, we begin with prayer and fasting, individually and corporately as the Church, as both have a powerful effect in this battle. We begin with worship, here in this church before we go out there to confront, to proclaim, to rejoice, to care, to show compassion and to pray.

But this is also an earthly battle! And we as the Church have been commissioned by none other than Jesus Christ himself!

Remember in Matthew 28 when the resurrected Jesus gathered with the disciples and said, "All authority in heaven and earth have been given me." What's the very next thing He says? "Go therefore." (Mt. 28:18) "Go therefore" means that we have been given that same Godly authority to act in the Name of God for the protection, aid and comfort of the "least of these," as disciples of Jesus Christ.

Friends, the question is, how are we using the authority that God has given us? There are two types of abuse of authority. One is the overextension of authority, but the other is the lack of use of authority. When God has given us the authority in His name to protect unborn children, and we do not act, that is an abuse of the authority that He has given us.

So what do we do? Well, the obstacles are many in this culture of death, and it gets so easy to be overwhelmed and to feel

paralyzed. We think, well, I'm just a simple Christian. I'm not in a position of power or authority. What can I do? The answer is very simple. Live out your Christian life. Seek to fulfill the great commandment of Christ that I just mentioned. Say it with me. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and you shall love your neighbor as yourself. It's so simple, right? How is it that the most simple commandment of Christ is the most difficult to fulfill?

But we keep that as our goal. That's what we set before us to love God with all of our being and to love our neighbor as ourself. Now, thankfully, Scripture gives us a straightforward formula of how to move forward. Listen to the words of St. Paul in the opening verses of his letter to the Romans, "Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus called to be an apostle set apart for the gospel of God." Did you catch the formula? Servant, called, sent like Paul. We are all called to be servants, but not just any kind of servant. The term that Paul uses here is *doulos*, which is a bond servant. Another term would be an indentured servant. A bond or indentured servant is one whose debt is so great that they cannot pay it. So, they are in the service of another until they either pay off their debt or receive forgiveness for their debt. What is the debt that St. Paul owes Jesus? The same debt that you and I owe Jesus! Everything. He paid the price for us on the cross. He saved us from what we deserve, the wrath of God. You want to be counter-cultural, talk about your debt to Christ in a room full of strangers. You'll see how fast conversation stops.

If you want to proclaim the gospel, talk about how God has forgiven you, your debt. Again, this servitude is not belittling or forced slavery. It is an attitude of the heart and an inclination of the mind. With a debt so big that I already know is forgiven, how can I do anything else but love him who loved me first?

I tell you —it is earth shattering and life changing when we realize the depth of our debt to Jesus and the height of His Grace poured out for us. The hymn *Amazing Grace* just barely touches the surface. We are servants who are CALLED by God!

Think about that for a second - the God of the universe, the creator of the world, the creator of you and me has called and equipped us for His service. God reaches out to us in Word and Sacrament. He reaches out to us through an audible voice, through visions, or a dream, often it is through the word of a friend or someone in authority in our lives.

The best advice I received when I became a bishop came from Bp. Bill Atwood who encouraged me to pray earnestly to the Lord whenever I have a baptism, confirmation or ordination, asking the Lord to give me a word or image to share with the individual to help guide them.

I have taken that advice to heart and it amazes me how often people come back and say that the word or image that the Lord gave me for them was right on target.

During COVID I received a call one day from the Philippines. It was from a woman who told me that years before I had her and shared with her an image that God had given me of her working with the poor in a foreign land.

When she told me that she laughed when I told her that, I immediately knew who she was as it was early on in my ministry and I wasn't all that confident that what I was sharing with people was a Word from the Lord or the Kung Pao Chicken I ate the night before!

In fact, I still tell everyone — I'm going to share this but you need to test it and the Lord will let you know if it's from Him or my indigestion.

When she called me, she said, "I'm calling to apologize" and that she had been "convicted by the Holy Spirit." It turns out that she was a nurse. And a couple years after she was confirmed, she met and fell in love with a wonderful man who is a physician. He felt a call to serve with Doctors without Borders, and that she was calling from the Philippines because they were ministering to covid patients in the slums outside of Manila. She apologized for laughing at me, but I give thanks to God that she listened and that she heard.

St. Paul tells us that he was "a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle," (Romans 1:1) That title Apostle means "One who is sent." Now for Paul it was also a special title of authority equal to Peter, Andrew, James and the other Apostles whom Jesus had commissioned.

But friends we too are given an Apostolic Mission — "Sent out by God" not only to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ but to embody the Good News of Him! Not simply to serve others, especially the least and the lost, but to love them. To love them means going beyond service. To love them means that you are willing to stand beside them, to suffer with them, and desire more for the other than you desire for yourself.



Above: Bishop Eric Menees preaches at the Anglican Prayer & Worship Service.

Years ago I was sent into the mission field by my bishop who needed Spanish speaking clergy. I went into missions with this "noble" (I told myself) desire to serve. Once there I was overcome with a sense of being lonely and afraid - in a way that I never felt before. But the very people I came to serve, loved me with a Christ-like love. In doing so, I was convicted and converted. And I loved them in a way I had never loved another. That love changed my life and shaped my ministry more than three years of seminary ever could.

Brothers and sisters, God is calling us to do the same for the Least of These, who are right around you.

How do we change a culture of death? By being the Christians that Jesus has called us to be. By heeding the call of Christ and serving Him as his beloved disciples.

Open up your home and your heart to receive a child from a mother who made the courageous decision to give birth to her child and who loved him or her enough to place them for adoption. Be that adoptive family or support a family who adopts. Volunteer at a pregnancy care center to stand with those women who are feeling so frightened and alone. Walk with those men who are seeking to support the child they have fathered and the mother who bore their child. Advocate for the life of an unborn child in the public square and in a private home. Lovingly share with women who have had an abortion that God can forgive them and because he can forgive them, they can forgive themselves. Sit at the bedside of a dementia patient or cancer patient reminding them that they are not alone and that their life has value.

How do we change a culture of death? One day at a time, one person at a time loving the least of these my brothers.

And to that I say...AMEN.



Show the World What the Church Can Do for Life

In 2023, Anglicans For Life is celebrating our 40th anniversary as a ministry. We are launching "40 for Life," a year-long campaign that celebrates the life and legacy of Anglicans For Life. We want to show the world what the church can do for life through specific activities and events that will engage the Church in Life-Affirming ministry, education, and biblical advocacy.

Our first event is a free, two-part webinar entitled, "Caring Not Killing." The first part of the conference was held on February 13 and the second part will take place on March 13. If you are interested in learning more, visit AnglicansForLife.org/40-for-life/. In case you miss the webinars, a recording will be accessible on the Anglicans For Life YouTube channel.

Our second event of the 40 for Life campaign occurs in April and May. Our goal is to hold the world's largest baby shower. We got the idea to create this nationwide baby shower after a radio station in Houston, Texas challenged local churches to collect diapers, formula, and baby paraphernalia to donate to pregnancy centers in support of the increased number of women that need help now that abortion is limited to 6 weeks in Texas.

Can you imagine if every church in the United States participated in this effort? We could ensure that women and babies were provided for, whether abortion is legal or illegal in their state. Providing practical resources and help can eliminate the fear mothers feel with their newfound responsibility.

We need you to start planning now to participate! Pick a donation deadline between April and May. Ask parishioners to purchase packages of diapers, formula, clothing, car seats, blankets, strollers, and baby gear like pacifiers, bibs, bottles. Set up a crib, bassinet or

playpen to gather the donated items on specified Sundays. Next, take a few pictures of the goods, inventory the items, and send the list and pictures to info@AnglicansForLife.org. The final step is to deliver the supplies to your local pregnancy center.

AFL will collect all the pictures and add up all the resources donated to establish a grand total amount of materials distributed nationwide to the pregnancy centers. AFL will also have promotional resources for this nationwide shower on the AnglicansForLife.org/40-for-life webpage so that you can download flyers, announcements, and graphics to promote your parish's event.

Please start planning for this with your church's leaders and help us get people from your parish involved and interested in Life-Affirming work. Together, we can show the world what the church can do for life!



Anglicans For Life is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, supported by churches, individuals, & foundations. Your contributions allow AFL to uphold the biblical principles of life and equip the Church for Life-Affirming ministry. Please use the enclosed envelope to make your donation. A financial statement is available upon request.

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