



The Anglican Diocese of the Southwest Diocesan Profile

Our Canons summarize the mission and work of the Anglican Diocese of the Southwest as follows:

The mission of this Diocese is to support the congregations in extending the Kingdom of God by so presenting Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit that people will come to put their trust in God through Him, know Him as Savior, and serve Him as Lord in the fellowship of the Church. A principal work of the Diocese is to encourage and assist the congregations in planting new congregations and to strengthen newly planted and existing congregations. (*Title 1. Canon 2.4.*)

It goes without saying that these core affirmations could be in the canons of any diocese in the ACNA. But each diocese finds itself pursuing this mission in a unique context and with locally adapted strategies. Accordingly, each diocese must be led by a bishop uniquely attuned to its needs and gifted for its advancement. We hope that this profile introduces you to our diocese in a way that helps you to discern if you are God's man to lead us forward.

A Numerical Sketch of the Anglican Diocese of the Southwest

Strictly by the numbers, we are 18 congregations (14 in the US, 4 in Mexico) and 8 missions (2 in the US, 6 in Mexico) totaling 1,120 members. Our congregations stretch from Colorado in the north to Veracruz in the south, and from West Texas in the east to New Mexico in the west. Though we have five congregations with well over 100 members, most of our congregations have 50 or fewer. We have a few fulltime clergy among our 35, but most are paid on a part-time basis or are non-stipendiary. Of those 35 clergy, 7 are women and 28 are men. We are organized into four regional deaneries centered in West Texas, El Paso, Albuquerque, and the whole of Mexico. Our budget in 2020 stands at \$171,500 and we have been blessed with a Matthew 25 grant of \$25,000 to assist with the work in Mexico. Since our founding in 2013, we have grown from 14 to 26 congregations.

Beyond the Numbers

Each diocese has its own uniqueness. Ours is tied to our diverse regions and cultures. Our 10 Mexican congregations and missions span much of the country with its own regional diversities of terrain, resources, history, languages, and peoples. North of the border, we encompass the plowed fields, grazing land and oil wells of West Texas, the wonderful mix of Native American and Anglo cultures of Albuquerque and points northward, and the vibrant urban borderlands of El Paso and Ciudad Juarez. Southeastern New Mexico also depends heavily on agriculture and mineral extraction. El Paso, Albuquerque, and Lubbock are larger cities and home to state universities.

There is a beautiful and compelling diversity in our vast diocese, but mostly, newcomers are surprised by how very much of the land is uninhabited. New Mexico boasts that it is the “Land of Enchantment.” True enough, but the same could be said of all the lands within the reach of our Diocese.

Opportunities and Challenges for Our Next Bishop

1. Mexico

That one word carries with it so much of the hope and prayer of the whole Anglican Diocese of the Southwest. As explained in Gus Haddad’s excellent essay on the growth of the ACNA’s work in Mexico (attached), this has been a growing deanery led principally by faithful Mexican clergy and lay people working in close cooperation with several U. S. born missionaries, Bishop Mark Zimmerman (our retired Diocesan), Gus Haddad (our Diocesan Missioner), and the clergy and people of the Church of St. Clements in El Paso. With the assistance of the Seminario in Ciudad Juarez, we are witnessing a groundswell of faithful graduates eager to follow God’s calling into the mission fields of Mexico. Our new bishop will embrace this work wholeheartedly, function bilingually (or learn to do so), and serve as a bridge between the faithful Anglicans in Mexico and the United States.

2. Aging Clergy and Smaller Parishes

North of the border, you will encounter a great many parishes with faithful priests who are, or soon will be, serving beyond their normal retirement age. Their parishes are loving centers of hope and ministry in towns that dot Colorado, New Mexico, and West Texas. Their people dearly love the Lord and are fiercely devoted to one another and the ministries they are called to in their own places. Even so, our next bishop will eventually be called upon to help many of these clergy and congregations through a time of transition to new leadership without the funding necessary to call a fulltime priest.

3. Church Planting

As the Bishop loves and cares for existing congregations, he will be called to work alongside many others to accelerate our church planting efforts north of the border. So many of our cities, towns and neighborhoods have no Anglican ministry at all. Archbishop Duncan was fond of saying that Anglicanism may not be the only way to be Christian, but it is a beautiful and reliable way. We yearn for people to discover that “reliable way” everywhere and for a missionary bishop who can help us make that happen. The challenge is great, but so is the spiritual reward for the bishop who takes it up.

4. Youth

There are many in our Diocese who are working and praying to reach a younger generation with the Gospel. A few of our congregations have wonderful youth leaders who disciple traditional youth groups. But more often, we have a child here or a teenager there but no real sustained process to help them grow in Christ. Our new bishop will work closely with youth leaders, clergy, and others to make our efforts with young people more fruitful in more places.

5. Distance and Diocesan Cohesiveness

Distances seems to work against meetings in person. When we do meet, attendance tends to be small and overnight stays are common. And though we are old hands now at Zoom and other meeting platforms, there is only so much that can be done screen to screen. Given the fact that many of our clergy are bi-vocational or unable to travel long distances, and the fact that most of our laypeople continue to serve in the workforce, the challenge to bring us together regularly has been great. Our new bishop will work with our Standing Committee, regional Deans, clergy and laypeople to find new ways to build one another up and to carry on the mission and governance of the Diocese.

The Calling

We believe that God has already chosen the right man to serve as our bishop. The Lord has prepared him for this great work over a lifetime of learning and ministry. The foundation of our diocese is solid, the people are ready, and the mission field is before us. Ask the Lord if you are that man. If so, we will work shoulder to shoulder with you and listen to the Lord together. We will celebrate every victory with you as we faithfully pursue God's mission for the Anglican Diocese of the Southwest.

Committee on Nominations
June 3, 2020