



The Missionary Society of St. John the Evangelist

Rule of Life (together with its Canons)

Approved by the General Assembly
25-27 August 2011
Clinton Township, Michigan
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27 October 2016, and 27 October 2017
Liberty, Kentucky)

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Collect Prayer for The Missionary Society of St John the Evangelist

Almighty God,
who anointed thy well-beloved Son with the Holy Spirit,
that he might preach the Gospel to the poor, heal the brokenhearted,
proclaim deliverance to the captive, recovery of sight to the blind;
to set at liberty those held in the bondage of oppression
and to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord's favor:
Pour out, we beseech thee, this same Holy Spirit on
the Missionaries of St. John the Evangelist,
that, following their Lord's example,
they also may proclaim, by words of power and deeds of mercy,
the everlasting Gospel of repentance, reconciliation and restoration;
and draw those who hear this Gospel from the power of darkness
into the Kingdom of thy dear Son, our Lord Jesus Christ,
who with thee, O Father, and the Holy Spirit,
livest and reignest, one God in glory everlasting.
Amen.

Opening Prayer

O God, our heavenly Father, who didst manifest thy love by sending thine only-begotten Son into the world that all might live through him: Pour thy Spirit upon thy Church that it may fulfill his command to preach the Gospel to every creature; send forth, we beseech thee, laborers into thy harvest; defend them in all dangers and temptations; and hasten the time when the fullness of the Gentiles shall be gathered in, and all Israel shall be saved; through thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen!

Preamble

The Missionary Society of St. John the Evangelist (“the Society” or “the MSJ”) are religious: lay, clergy, or those who have committed themselves to a particular calling or ministry who have at the heartbeat of their daily lives the two-fold essence and ministry of the Church Catholic within the Anglican Tradition: Unity and Mission. The completeness of this vision is 1) the work of Unity requiring daily repentance, worship, and intercession as preparations for ecumenical dialogue, and 2) the work of Mission requiring evangelization in both word and deed (1 John: 3-4), pastoral care, and work among those whom the institutional churches often overlook. The completeness of this vision keeps the members of the Society grounded in the Scriptural Word of God, in the full sacramental life of the Church, and in a daily experience of Christ present in their lives through the multifaceted ministry of the Holy Spirit, both personally and corporately. The members of the Society commit their lives to an evangelical fervor for the Catholic Faith, empowered by the Holy Spirit, recognizing that this has been the historic ministry of the Church, God’s consistent pattern of revival and renewal from the Day of Pentecost, through the ages, to the present.

The Mission Statement

The Missionary Society of St. John the Evangelist embraces its divine call to proclaim, with evangelical zeal, the saving Gospel of Christ, in both Word and Sacrament. In order to support that proclamation, the Society establishes communities, houses and other ministries: places where God’s People may be gathered together for service to the wider community and strengthened by worship, teaching, and ministry to one another for that service.

The MSJ Ethos

The Missionary Society of St. John the Evangelist is comprised of religious: lay, clergy, or those who have committed themselves to a particular calling or ministry, living in the world as single individuals, married couples, or families. Members have committed their lives to proclaim the Good News that “God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not counting men’s sins against them” (2 Cor. 5:19), and to live that Gospel in their daily lives,

incarnating by their actions and relationships the two-fold essence of Christ's Church: unity in truth and love with other believers (John 17:1-26; 1 John 3:1-3; 16-18, 23-24), and the proclamation of the Gospel to "all nations," teaching, baptizing, and making disciples, "delivering them from the dominion of darkness and transferring them to the kingdom of God's beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins". (Matt. 28:19-20; Col. 1:13).

As Anglican Christians, we embrace the fullness of the Sacraments and the Ecumenical Councils of the undivided Church, and we express this apostolic Faith through the rites and traditions of historic Anglicanism, using the Book of Common Prayer in our personal and corporate worship. We also embrace the best from a wide variety of devotional practices and musical traditions so that our worship may be vibrant yet reverent.

Many people think of a missionary as a special type of Christian who goes to strange and far away lands to preach the Gospel and help people, and the MSJ does do that! But the United States has become a mission field, and in this often-neglected field we are planting communities and other expressions of religious life, places where the inspired Word of God is proclaimed as truth, where children learn about Jesus, and where, with the family of God, the sacraments of God's loving grace are celebrated. Our worship, our hearts, our lives are committed to His service and in His hands.

"Mere Christianity," a term first coined by C. S. Lewis, has come to mean "that core of doctrine on which all believing Christians can agree, and the manner of life which that doctrine requires." In this we heartily agree with many other Christian brothers and sisters. But "Mere Christianity" does not mean "lowest-common-denominator Christianity," but "the fullness of the Faith," and, as Anglican Christians we can agree in love with the truth found not only in Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy, but with the truth found in evangelical, albeit non-sacramental, churches.

Article One: How we worship, pray and serve together.

Summary: The members of the Missionary Society worship in the Anglican fashion as “Prayer Book Catholics,” with reverence and awe at the majesty and mercy of God, but also with joy and gratitude at His love “shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit.” The worship of each member is characterized by active participation in the Sunday Liturgy, the Daily Office, and personal “free prayer,” leading to deeper relationship with Christ and a zeal to share the Gospel message. Our “service” takes many forms, according to the gifts that God has granted us individually and as communities.

I. The Sunday Liturgy

A. The Sunday Liturgy is understood to be the Holy Eucharist

1. The members of the Society gather together Sunday by Sunday, following the Lord’s commandment and the tradition of the undivided Church to keep the feast of Christ’s victory over sin and death “until he shall come again.”
2. In the absence of a priest or deacon, an authorized and trained layman may lead The Office of Morning Prayer as acceptable Sunday worship.

B. The worship of the Society is Anglican in form, but partakes of the traditions of the wider Church universal throughout the ages.

1. The Approved Rites of the Church include those based in the Anglican Missal and the 1549 Book of Common Prayer. Other traditional/historic rites must be approved by the Father General, who is the head of the Society.
2. Recognizing that each worshipping community will have its own “flavor,” based on the background of its members, we rejoice in that blessed “liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free” (Gal. 5:1) which allows for diverse forms of music and praise of God, choosing from the best that the Church has had to offer in all times and all cultures. We embrace this diversity with the understanding that worship is directed to God Himself, for His pleasure and delight in His children, and not as a form of entertainment or mere emotionalism masquerading as “true, spiritual worship.”
3. The Sunday Liturgy of the Society, following the most ancient traditions, is open to the Ministry of the Holy Spirit in the manifestation of all His gifts as an integral part of the Liturgy (albeit,

a convenient time may be set aside, as for example, after the Holy Communion). Such gifts include words of prophecy, words of knowledge, words of wisdom, tongues and their interpretation, divine healing, gifts of faith and miracles, the discernment of spirits (I Cor. 12:4-11). Again, following the tradition of the undivided Church, the exercise of these gifts is to be in godly order and under the direction of the celebrant, who must himself be sensitive to the movement of the Spirit while maintaining the integrity of the Prayer Book Liturgy.

II. The Daily Office, often called The Divine Office

A. The Daily Office is the standard of daily prayer for members of the society.

1. Ordained clergy are obligated, by virtue of their ordination vows, to pray the Daily Office (either Morning or Evening Prayer), as a sacrifice of praise and intercession for the Church and for the World. In this, they join the prayer of the universal Church before the Throne of Mercy. The Daily Office is not primarily one's private devotion, although the clergyman may derive spiritual benefit from it; it is prayer for the Church, the State, and all those in need, as well as praise and thanksgiving for God's mercies and inestimable benefits to us in Christ.
2. The Office should be prayed corporately at least once a week, with public notice thereof.
3. The laity are encouraged to pray the Daily Office.
(For the right and the power of the laity praying the Daily Office, see Document Four)

III. Personal Prayer and Private Devotion

A. In addition to the Daily Office, the members of the Society pray daily in whatsoever manner they choose and may practice private devotions for their spiritual enrichment.

1. Members of the Society are expected to keep a free and open relationship with Jesus Christ through the practice of informal daily prayer (as best strengthens their spiritual life) and daily meditation on the Word of God, even if that meditation is on no more than a single verse.
2. The practice of private devotion is left open to the individual member's own piety and spiritual discipline. Private devotion is not a substitute for the Daily Office, which is the Prayer of the Church.

IV. Acts of Service, Personal and Corporate

A. In addition to participating in their community's or ministry's mission to the local community, members of the Society are expected to demonstrate their faith “not only with our lips but in our lives” in personal acts of charity and service.

1. Members of the Society serve all men and women in quiet acts of charity from the heart, and, if possible, anonymously, praying that God will use this gift to grow a desire for Himself in the recipient, or to open a way for the sharing of the Gospel-message.

2. Communities are encouraged to join with other Christian bodies in works of benefit to the local community, that the Missionaries may have a public face for their faith, and perhaps draw others to the Faith of Christ Jesus.

3. Recognizing that the ordained clergy have been set aside for special purposes in God's service and that the ministry of the Church is vastly larger than the ministry of the clergy, the Society opens all forms of ministry, other than those reserved to ordained clergy, to Professed Members of the Society. These forms of service are open to men and women, those formally educated and those educated by experience, with the approval of the local Father and the community's council.

Article Two: Partnership and Ministry in the Society

Summary: The Missionary Society shall be served by all baptized Christians who embrace the Vision of the Society by exercising their callings and gifts in the Church and sharing the Gospel to the world. Every baptized believer is a minister in the Body of Christ. All Christians are called to participate in the Great Commission to share in making known the Gospel.

I. Participation in the Society

A. Friends of the Society:

1. A Friend of the MSJ is a Christian who has been baptized in water in the name of the Trinity: God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit and who has not discerned a call to Membership in the Society, but chooses to support the Society in time, talent, treasure and prayer.

2. The Society deeply appreciates their often-sacrificial level of support to the ministries of the MSJ. They are to be kept apprised of developments in the ministry they support, and if they choose, of the MSJ in general.

II. Membership

A. Definition of Membership- Application Process & Discipline:

A Member of the MSJ is a Christian who has been baptized in water in the name of the Trinity: God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, and who has discerned the Lord's call to him or her to Membership in the Society, to which call he or she has responded in faith, by making application and being accepted through the taking of the Vow of Membership.

B. Levels of Membership

Recognizing that there will be different levels of commitment and different tasks undertaken by the Members, the designations of Membership reflect (with one exception) incremental stages of participation in the life of the Society, but are also descriptive of the work the Member is engaged in at a particular stage of his or her life and ministry.

The levels are:

- Professed Member**
- Elder Member**
- Companion Member**
- Friends of the Society**

An amplification of this article is found in Canon One of the Canons.

It is normative for all Members of the Missionary Society of St John to maintain fellowship in a community established by the Society, and to regularly participate in the life of the community, including sharing in the sacraments. Friends use such aspects of the Rule as inspiration and guidance, to assist them in their walk with the Lord and in accordance with their circumstances

C. Responsibilities of Members include:

1. Regular participation in the life of the Church; including the Local Chapter.
2. Contributing time, talents and treasures; the tithe being the biblical standard of returning to God a portion of the bounty He has poured upon us.
3. Serving through various gifts and ministries for the building up of the Church;
4. A commitment to the Great Commission and The Great Commandment, looking for ways to live these out daily in one's normal circumstances of life.
5. A commitment to pray for the mission and ministries, the Father General, clergy, and Members of the Society. (*See Article Two above and Document Four*)

III. Companion Members who belong to ACNA dioceses, other Anglican churches or orthodox Christian communions.

A. Laity or clergy whose primary obedience is to their own diocesan bishop, or who belong to other Anglican churches or orthodox Christian communions, and who wish to join the MSJ may do so at the Companion Member level, subject to the permission of their own ecclesiastical authority and the approval of the Father General of the Society.

B. Such members observe such aspects of the Rule of Live as is best compatible with their own circumstances and abilities.

IV. The Evangelistic Imperative of All Members

A. All members of the Society, lay or clerical, are expected to live their lives in such manner that they are ready at all times to “give a defense for the faith they hold” (I Pet. 3:15) and to lead the lost to Christ. In this, they have prayer for the conversion of the lost as the heart of their prayer and an attentive eye for opportunities for ministry to all people. Members are encouraged to understand that conversion is a process rather than an event and that an inquiring soul may take weeks, months, or even years before coming to Christ. This is especially true of the lay members who are far often more effective missionaries than the clergy or religious can be. “The World” expects the Gospel from the clergy and religious, but is often taken unawares when the straightforward Gospel of Salvation is shared over a cup of coffee or a sandwich in a diner with an acquaintance, a co-worker, someone who had nowhere else to sit. Members have then, as part of their prayer lives,

their world-view and daily expectation, the conversion of ordinary folk to the Faith of Christ, to an intimate relationship with Him, and to incorporating them into His Body, the Church, for nourishment and discipleship. This is our joy and our zeal, the inner flame which burns in our hearts; to share the glorious salvation that we ourselves have received and hold as our greatest treasure, and the sharing of it as our greatest privilege.

Article Three: How is the Society governed?

Summary: The Missionary Society of St. John the Evangelist is governed by a Father General, assisted by an Advisory Council and the consent of the majority of members. The goal of governance is godly consensus and servant leadership, rather than “majority rule, minority rights” or “minority rule, majority rights.” A fuller explanation of all governmental processes is found in Canon Two of the attached Canons, By-laws, and Protocols.

I. The Head of the Society

A. The Title of the Head of the Society

The official title of the Head of the Society shall be “Father General.” It should be noted that “general,” in this context means “of the whole.”

B. The Responsibilities of the Head of the Society

1. The responsibilities of the Father General of the Society shall be the care of the Society, taking priority over any and all other commitments he may be called to or choose to accept.
2. The Father General shall concern himself with the life of the whole of the Society, that the members may conduct their various ministries and vocations without hindrance. His areas of authority and responsibility include the physical, financial, governmental, and spiritual well-being of the Society.
3. The Father General may be called on to represent the Society at gatherings of the larger Church, be those gatherings of other religious societies and orders, or sub-provincial or provincial gatherings.

II. The Father General’s Advisory Council and the Office of Episcopal Protector

A. The Father General may select counselors to advise him on questions facing the Society.

B. These counselors may be clerical or lay Members and are chosen personally by the Father General, with the following exception.

C. The Deans are *ex officio* members of this Council.

D. This Council is called on the Father General's initiative and has power to gather information, "to counsel, to encourage, and to warn," but no power to legislate.

E. The Society shall elect (or delegate the Father General to invite) an Episcopal Protector for pastoral care, teaching, and encouragement as also for oversight and accountability. The process is detailed in the Canons.

III. Chapters and Deans

A. The Chapter

A Chapter shall consist of all members: lay, clergy, or those who have committed themselves to a particular calling or ministry, active and retired, within a specified geographical region. The purpose of a Chapter meeting is three-fold: a) fellowship, prayer, and mutual encouragement; b) discussion of matters laid before it by the Father General; and c) continuing education. The Chapter shall be administered by the Dean (see below).

B. The Deans

The Dean of each Chapter is a senior clergyman who has the responsibility to a) call meetings of the Chapter in a timely manner, perhaps designating a particular day during the month for a meeting; b) set the agenda for the meeting; and c) work with the host church (if it is not his own church) to ensure that items necessary to the meeting will be furnished.

C. Other Ecclesiastical Officers: Canons

(this section may need revision at some future time, depending on the development of the community life of the Society)

1. The Canon for Foreign Missionaries will oversee and maintain regular contact with Missionaries who are serving in foreign countries or overseas US territories.

2. The Canon for Domestic Missionaries will oversee and maintain regular contact with Missionaries who are serving within the United States.

D. Other Ecclesiastical Officers: *A fuller explanation of all governmental officers is found in Canon Two of the attached Canons, By-laws, and Protocols*

IV: The Missionary Society General Assembly

A General Assembly shall be held every year. The Father General shall call for such an assembly and make the Assembly known as to its location, date and agenda. The primary focus of the Assembly shall be holy fellowship, worship and encouragement. Changes to the Rule of Life, Canons and By-laws may be presented for approval as necessary. The financial reports shall be openly reported. The Assembly shall hear reports on the mission and ministry of the Society.

V: The Funding of the Society

A. The Father General's Advisory Council will present a budget to the General Assembly for its approval.

1. The Advisory Council may delegate this work to a Financial Committee, which will report to the Advisory Council which shall present it to the General Assembly and bear responsibility for its contents.
2. The budget will include such items as the remuneration and expenses of the Father General, as well of disbursement of funds to various ministries and projects for the maintenance and furtherance of the Society.

Article Four: The Expressions of the Society's Ministry.

***Summary:** The Missionaries of St. John the Evangelist embrace a wide variety of ministry expressions, from communities and traditional parishes to a semi-secluded intercessory House of Prayer. Between these very different expressions there are defined ministries which focus on evangelization or the training of clergy, dedicated religious, and lay people, as well as ministries in jails and prisons, in slums, and in rural areas long ago abandoned by other churches. **Note:** The following do NOT exhaust the possibilities of community life within the MSJ but are merely the most formally designated (since they are covenantally agreed upon) of a wide variety of far more informal living situations and ministry, dictated by local circumstances.*

I. Conventional expressions: The Community and the Communal Expression.

A. The Community and the Communal Expression:

1. These expressions of the society will look, sound, and feel like many other communities of the religious orders within the Anglican tradition, with the exception that they will have an emphasis on evangelization and discipleship, of bringing the lost to Christ and raising them up in the Faith.

2. Of necessity, most priests, deacons, and professed religious of the Society will be bi-vocational.

B. MSJ Houses and Home Groups:

1. MSJ Houses are groups of single men or women, or sometimes families with singles living with them who have covenanted to live under the Rule and are devoted to Prayer and ministry. It is expected that they may be temporary, as in four young men at college, or perhaps semi-permanent (with single people moving on with their lives after a season). It may well be that a family may accept an elderly Member into their household “for the long term.”

2. MSJ Home Groups are more informal gatherings of families and singles in a local area for fellowship and mutual encouragement.

C. Other expressions of the MSJ:

1. Other expressions of the MSJ include (but are not limited to): Individuals or married couples living away from other MSJ Members, Retreat Houses, Houses of Private Prayer, Hermitages, and those away on military service. These Members should be remembered in the prayers and communications (newsletters, etc.) of larger Communities.

D. Missionaries: Foreign and Domestic:

1. As a missionary society, we have ministries that focus on evangelization in foreign countries and cultures and the raising up of leaders among the newly converted in those countries and cultures.

2. Domestic missionaries are priests, deacons and lay people (often families) who settle in an area where the Gospel has not been or is no longer preached, and who lay the foundations for an MSJ community by their manner of life, as much as by their words. They may begin with evening Bible studies or simple conversations in the local coffee shop, but they are new leaven in a society which needs the Gospel preached and the Sacraments celebrated.

II. Non-traditional expressions of Ministry

A. Ministries in Unlikely Places:

1. These expressions of the Society are found wherever the Gospel needs to be preached and the Sacraments need to be celebrated (e.g. prisons, reservations, ethnic centers).

2. Some of these ministries will be “unofficial” for legal reasons.

B. Outreach Ministries:

1. These expressions of the society reach out to the needs of the larger society for basic necessities, following the Gospel imperative to “feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked,” “care for widows and orphans.” (St. Matt.25: 34-36; Jas. 1: 27)
2. They may also minister to those whose lives are enslaved to drugs, alcohol, or sexual passions; to the victims and perpetrators of domestic violence, and to others in need.
3. They may offer legal or medical services to those who have no other access to them.
4. They may be attached to a community or another ministry, or they may be stand-alone ministries, but they operate with the underlying rule of evangelization built upon practical deeds of kindness.

C. Hidden or Interior Ministries:

1. Missionary enterprises require massive amounts of time and energy for those who are on the front lines. What is less well known is that these ministries must also be upheld by prayer: prayer for the work itself, prayer for those ministering and their families, prayer for finances, and prayer for those who are in need of salvation. These interior ministries are committed to that prayer.
2. They may also have a secondary function as a retreat house, a house of study, a house of spiritual direction, or as a house of confidential counsel.
3. Their ministry may have been a calling or thrust upon them by circumstance, but they have embraced it, both as a blessing and a cross.

COLLECT FOR MISSION

**O God, who hast made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on the face of the earth, and didst send thy blessed Son Jesus Christ to preach peace to them that are afar off, and to them that are nigh: Grant that all the people of the world may seek after thee and find thee; hasten, O Lord, the fulfillment of thy promise, to pour out thy Spirit on all flesh, through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.**

Canons

(containing incidental Protocol Elements)

Canon One: Partnership and Ministry in the Society

Summary: The Missionary Society shall be served by baptized Christians who embrace the Vision of the Society by exercising their callings and gifts in the Church and sharing the Gospel to the world. Every baptized believer is a minister in the Body of Christ. All Christians are called to participate in the Great Commission to share in making known the Gospel. All clergy members are encouraged to be members in good standing of Forward in Faith, North America.

I. Participation in the Society

A. Friends of the Society:

A Friend of the MSJ is a Christian who has been baptized in water in the name of the Trinity: God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit and who has not discerned a call to Membership in the Society, but chooses to support the Society in time, talent, treasure and prayer.

Recognizing that there will be those who worship in MSJ communities but who do not believe themselves to be called to Membership in the Society (college students, seasonal visitors, those who belong to another Anglican body but who have no parish nearby) and that, in their time among us, they wish to contribute as much as they can of their time, talent, and treasures (e.g. musical gifts, manual labor, teaching Sunday School, as well as financial support), the Society recognizes their value as Friends and does not require them to enter the Membership Process in order to exercise their gifts in the local body, under the leadership and guidance of the local pastor.

Equally so, there are those who support an MSJ ministry, through gifts of finances, prayer, and other resources, but who are members of other church bodies. The Society deeply appreciates their often-sacrificial level of support to the ministries of the MSJ. They are to be kept apprised of developments in the ministry they support, and if they choose, of the MSJ in general. Anyone who is in regular participatory attendance in an MSJ community and who desires to do so may apply to be a Friend of the Society. Young adults (from the age of fourteen until their eighteenth birthday) may apply, with

their parents' permission and the approval of their local pastor. After the age of eighteen has been reached, the young person is subject only to the approval of his pastor in applying for Friendship or Membership, but should bear in mind the commandment to "Honor thy father and mother," as a sufficient sign from the Lord to defer application, should his or her parents voice substantive objections. The validity of the substance of those objections shall be reached in consensus with the young adult, the parents, and the pastor, with preference given to deferring application for a specified period of time (six months or one year).

It is normative for all Friends of the Missionary Society of St John to maintain fellowship in a community established by the Society or of another particular orthodox congregation and to regularly participate in the life of the community, including sharing in the sacraments.

II. Membership

A. Definition of Membership - Application Process & Discipline:

A Member of the MSJ is a Christian who has been baptized in water in the name of the Trinity: God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit and who has discerned the Lord's call to him or her to Membership in the Society, to which call he or she has responded in faith, by making application and being accepted through the taking of the Vow of Membership.

1. Application for Membership is made in writing by the applicant, endorsed by the local ecclesiastical authority (pastor or ministry director), and if the applicant is under the age of eighteen by his or her parents. Applications are approved by the Father General of the Society or his delegate. The applicant shall be notified in a timely manner of his or her acceptance or non-acceptance for Membership. If not accepted, the applicant shall have a written explanation of the reasons for this decision, with suggestions for such amendment that the next application may be accepted. The applicant may appeal the decision directly to the Father General of the Society, whose decision on the appeal shall be final. If the local ecclesiastical authority cannot endorse the application, he should inform the applicant of this decision in a timely manner, and make an appointment to suggest such amendment that the next application may be accepted. An application which has not been accepted may be re-submitted (with new endorsements) at six month to one year intervals, depending on the reason for the first non-acceptance.

2. A Member may resign his or her Membership by letter to the Father General of the Society, with a copy to the local MSJ ecclesiastical authority.

3. A Member may be disciplined or suspended from active ministry by the local ecclesiastical authority for a) teaching contrary to the Faith of the Church Catholic, b) gross disobedience and rebellion, c) unrepentant immoral or licentious behavior or manner of living, or d) habitual violations of the Rule. Either the ecclesiastical authority or the Member has the right to appeal the case to the Father General and the Advisory Council of the Society, with the local ecclesiastical authority and any other relevant witnesses present, either in person or by deposition. The decision of the Father General of the Society is final. Such discipline or suspension will be “for a season” with the aim of restoration, during which time the Member is ministered to as a Friend, without expectation of active ministry, until such time as the Member can be restored to his or her former place. If such ministry is definitively refused, then the suspension may be reassessed as permanent until such amendment of life has been demonstrated by the Member and reviewed and approved by the Father General, at the request of the local ecclesiastical authority.

4. In cases of discipline or suspension, the Member may appeal to the Episcopal Protector for a review of the causes, process, and means of restoration. The Episcopal Protector shall confer with the Father General and make a definitive final ruling from which there is no appeal.

B. Levels of Membership

Recognizing that there will be different levels of commitment and different tasks undertaken by the Members, the designations of Membership reflect (with one exception) incremental stages of participation in the life of the Society, but are also descriptive of the work the Member is engaged in at a particular stage of his or her life and ministry.

The levels are:

Professed Member: This is a Member (lay or clergy) who has committed his or her whole life to the Missionaries of St. John as the portion of the Church Catholic which is his or her home, having no other PRIMARY commitment to any other institution of the Church, whether diocesan or another religious order or society. For the Professed Member, the Society IS his or her firm “home in Christ,” and this has been demonstrated by faithfulness in attendance, tithing, and service for a minimum of three years prior to acceptance to this status.

Elder Member: This is a Member (lay or clergy) who through age or infirmity has had to retire from active ministry. His or her contributions have given him or her a wisdom and maturity such that he or she has the right to be consulted on decisions in his or her local community, in chapter meetings, and in the larger counsels of the Society. The status of Elder Member is not automatic upon retirement from active ministry, and is entirely within the gift of the Father General, who needs to hear the voices of experience, memory, and wisdom of those who have proven themselves through their service. It is expected that the number of Elder Members will be small, although this again is subject to the discernment of the Father General.

Members who retire from ministry and who are not so called by the Father General or who prefer to retire even from this position of responsibility, resume the designation of Companion Member, doing what they are able or willing to undertake in service, while retaining the affection, honor, and deference which Scripture commands us to bestow on them.

It is normative for all Members of the Missionary Society of St John to maintain fellowship in a community established by the Society, and to regularly participate in the life of the community, including sharing in the sacraments.

A Member or Elder Member of the Society is entitled to add the initials "MSJ" after his or her signature, if he or she so desires.

Companion Members may belong to other ACNA dioceses, other Anglican churches or orthodox Christian communions. These members, whether laity or clergy give their primary obedience is to their own diocesan bishop or authority. They may join the MSJ as a Companion Member, subject to the permission of their own ecclesiastical authority and the approval of the Father General of the Society. Such members observe such aspects of the Rule of Live as is best compatible with their own circumstances and abilities.

Friends of the Society: This is a Christian (lay or clergy) who gives of his or her time, labor, and gifts, but who is limited (by other commitments or circumstances) from giving himself or herself fully to the vision and ministry of the Society. Friends have voice in the Assembly but no vote.

C. Responsibilities of Members include:

1. Regular participation in the life of the Church;
2. Contributing time, talents and treasures; the tithe being the biblical standard of returning to God a portion of the bounty He has poured upon us.
 - a. The tithe is paid by non-parochial Members to their local community or to the Society directly, depending on their

- circumstance; Friends and Companion Members who are members of parishes (in the MDAS, or in some other diocese, jurisdiction, or communion) will naturally pay their tithes to their local parish.
3. Serving through various gifts and ministries for the building up of the Church;
 4. A commitment to the Great Commission and The Great Commandment, looking for ways to live these out daily in one's normal circumstances of life.
 5. A commitment to pray for the mission and ministries, the Father General, clergy, and Members of the Society. *(See Article Two above and Document Four)*

D. Responsibilities of Clergy to Friends and Members

Clergy are responsible to see that ALL Members are 1) instructed in the Scriptures and trained up in discipleship; 2) administered the Sacraments of the Church; 3) given pastoral attention and care appropriate to each Member's stage of life and spiritual development and maturity. It is especially important that clergy pay particular attention to the pastoral care of those who are the hardest workers and greatest servants, as they are often overlooked in terms of needing ministry.

E. Dedicated Brothers and Sisters: Those who have committed themselves to a particular calling or ministry

1. Upon application, a man or woman of devout character and time proven fitness may be set apart to the order of dedicated brothers or to the order of dedicated sisters, by the Father General. This state in life is called "professed religious" or "dedicated religious."
2. The brothers and sisters, although still of the laity, along with the clergy and others of the Society, form a single family. Brothers and sisters commit themselves to the fullness of holiness by personally and voluntarily consecrating themselves to religious life for a specific ministry or purpose in the service of the Missionary Society, in parish work, in charity work, or in active missionary work.
3. In order to consecrate themselves to God's service in the religious life, brothers and sisters make a freely given, public profession of holiness, obedience and service before the Father General or his designated representative. Vows may be made and affirmed for one year, three years or five years, through application by the one making profession, and by affirmation by the Father General or his designated representative. After a test of time, the Father-General may approve perpetual vows, if requested.

4. Brothers and sisters have the same responsibilities as the Friends and Members of the Society. They may be addressed as “brother” and “sister”. As appropriate to the fulfilling of their mission, they may be attired in the vesture prescribed by the Father General or his designated representative.

5. Brothers and sisters may live with their family, friends, or as individuals, with the approval of the Father General or his designated representative. They may or may not have secular employment. They will express God's call on their life in writing to the Father- General or his representative, for ecclesiastical affirmation.

6. The brother or sister will be released from appropriate vows upon written application to the Father General, or by the disciplinary procedures already delineated in the Rule of Life.

III. Members who belong to other churches or ecclesiastical bodies

A. Lay persons, religious, or clergy who belong to other Christian churches or ecclesiastical bodies and who wish to join the MSJ may do so as either a Friend or Companion, subject to the permission of their own ecclesiastical authority and the approval of the Father General of the Society.

B. Such members observe the responsibilities of the level of membership that they have chosen as best compatible with their own circumstances.

IV. The Honoring of our Elders: the Founding Members

A. A vital aspect of our Society are those MSJs who are now part of a diocesan structure or even “labor in another part of the vineyard” that is the Church Catholic and Apostolic. By their “status,” they are committed to their proper authority (either diocesan or in another tradition of the Church), but in their hearts they remain committed to the ethos and vision of the MSJ. They remain very dear to the Society as a whole and their gifts and labors on behalf of the Society enrich us all. They bring ideas and perspectives to the re-focusing of our Vision which we do well to listen to with great care. As a deacon, in his ordination, vows to “bring the concerns of the world to the Church,” so they bring the concerns of the wider Church to the Society. They are God’s gift in our midst.

B. Although now called to serve the Lord in other areas of His Vineyard or to retire from public ministry, although never the ministry of prayer and intercession, these men and women have walked with the Society since before the days of its formal Founding 2006 to the 2009 convocation in Fort Worth which drew up our original Rule of Life. (The founding of the MSJ

actually took place when a dozen folks met at St John the Apostle and signed the original charter on the Feast of St Nicholas some 8 years ago, Dec. 6, 2006. The approximately three years from the signing of that original charter signing, on down to the approval of our first Rule on Oct. 27, 2009, in Ft Worth, were the "years of gathering and formation", "the Founding Years" and we acknowledge those who took their vows to the Society during that period as Founding Members.) These have been such members, dedicated by their service, their thoughtful counsel, and by diligent love from that "formation time." As the Lord Himself designated The Twelve out of His many disciples, those who had "walked with Him from the beginning," so the Society is pleased to confer the title "Founding Member" in recognition of their faithful service to us at in our early and uncertain days.

C. We recognize that there are still active Members, faithful to their service in the Society, who share the same distinction of "having been there at the beginning," and when they retire from active ministry or find themselves called by God to serve elsewhere in a part of the Church Catholic and Apostolic, they shall also receive this same honor. But now, as we transition from what we once were to what we see before us, we wish to recognize and honor those who, for good and godly reasons, have committed themselves to the episcopal authority of the diocesan structure or who have had to leave the Anglican Tradition in which the Society is firmly rooted and growing, and we wish to express our gratitude for their past contributions and to recognize the reality of their present service outside the Society while still maintaining in their hearts and lives their on-going commitment to the MSJ ethos and vision. They will ever be a part of us and most welcome in the councils of the Society as they have ever been.

Canon Two: The Governmental Structure of the Society

Summary: The Missionary Society shall be administered by a minimal structure that the focus may remain on the calling to spread the Gospel This structure may need amplification as the Society grows and therefore outgrows the initial structure. All such re-structuring shall be at the request of the Father General. Structures such as communities, ministries, and ordained clergy shall be dealt with more fully in succeeding canons.

I. The Head of the Society

A. The Title of the Head of the Society

The official title of the Head of the Society shall be “Father General.” It should be noted that “general,” in this context means “of the whole.”

B. The Status of the Head of the Society

1. The Head of the Society is The Father General of the Society and its primary authority. He is styled then “The Most Rev. Father General...” and wears a black cassock with amaranth buttons and trim with a gold or silver pectoral cross, as he chooses.
2. In formal speech, the Father General is addressed as “Most Reverend Father”; in ordinary speech, he is addressed as he himself designates.
3. Upon retirement, the Father General is automatically named a Canon Extraordinary as “Father General Emeritus,” but retains his previous cassock and the right to wear his pectoral cross.

C. The Responsibilities of the Head of the Society

1. The responsibilities of the Father General of the Society shall be the care of the Society, taking priority over any and all other commitments he may be called to or choose to accept.
2. The Father General shall concern himself with the life of the whole of the Society, that the members may conduct their various ministries and vocations without hindrance. His areas of authority and responsibility include the physical, financial, governmental, and spiritual well-being of the Society.
3. The Father General may be called on to represent the Society at gatherings of the larger Church, be those gatherings of other religious societies and orders, or sub-provincial or provincial gatherings.
4. The Father General may, with the consultation of his Advisory Council and the approbation of the Society, appoint a Father General Coadjutor to assist him in his duties. It is understood that the Coadjutor is the Father General's eventual nominee as his successor, unless the Coadjutor should retire, prove unfit, or pre-decease the Father General of the Society. Should the Coadjutor prove unfit for his duties, he may be removed by the Father General, with the concurrence of the Advisory Council.

D. The Removal of the Head of the Society

1. Should the Head of the Society violate his office, by means of false teaching, immoral and unrepentant licentious manner of life, abuse of power, or other circumstances occasioning the outcry of the Members and Officers of the Society, and the Father General has refused to listen to the voice of his Advisory Council or his other officers and make amendment of life and restoration of fellowship, then the Deans (and any other officers of the Society) shall together approach the Society's Episcopal Protector to intervene, first to investigate and if necessary reprove; second, if there be no amendment, to place the Father General under ecclesiastical discipline, depriving him of his sacerdotal functions and the administration of the Society; and finally, if there still be no amendment, to convene an ecclesiastical court of the appropriate ecclesiastical authorities to hear the case which shall result in acquittal or deposition from the oversight of the Society, but not from Holy Orders. He may remain a priest, but in retirement from any and all active ministry.

2. During such time, the Father General may not remove or replace any of the ecclesiastical officers who have brought charges against him. If he is acquitted, he may remove them from office, but not from membership in the Society nor from their ministries if they be associated with a particular ministry. If they are charged and tried in an ecclesiastical court, they will have the right of appeal to the Society's Episcopal Protector.

3. Should the Father General be deprived of his administration of the Society, the administration will be placed in the hands of a *pro tempore* committee comprised of the Deans and a lay Member (one from each chapter), plus one priest appointed by the Episcopal Protector, from his own diocese, as an observer and advisor, but without vote.

E. The Replacement of the Head of the Society

1. The Father General may elect to retire and may nominate the priest that he believes God would have as his successor, who shall be approved or disapproved at the next General Assembly. Until such time he shall function as the Father General Coadjutor and perform the duties of the Father General.

2. Should the Father General be removed for just cause, the Deans of the full Communities will inform the membership the cause for the removal (in discreet terms) and will nominate a successor, who shall be approved or disapproved at the next General Assembly. Until such

time he shall function as the Father General Coadjutor and perform the duties of the Father General.

3. Should the Father General retire without nominating a potential successor, die or be otherwise incapacitated while still in office, the Deans of the full Communities will inform the membership and will nominate a successor, who shall be approved or disapproved at the next General Assembly. Until such time he shall function as the Father General Coadjutor and perform the duties of the Father General.

4. The decision of the Society's vote in Assembly shall be re-counted and ratified by the Office of the Society's Episcopal Protector.

5. As befits a missionary society, the Father General may move the Society's Headquarters to his own locale. All officers shall retain their positions until the newly installed Father General can make a full assessment and take counsel as to further action.

II. The Father General's Advisory Council and the Office of Episcopal Protector

A. The Father General shall select counselors to advise him on questions facing the Society.

B. These counselors are ordinarily an equal number of clerical and lay Members and are chosen personally by the Father General, based upon their expertise and his relationship with them, with the following exception.

C. The Deans of the Communities are *ex officio* members of this Council.

D. This Council is called *ad hoc*, on the Father General's initiative and has power to gather information, "to counsel, to encourage, and to warn," but no power to legislate.

E. The Father General may gather counsel face-to-face, by phone or e-mail, as he chooses.

F. Should the Council (together with the Father General) reach a firm consensus and the Father General later decides on another course of action, the members of the Council are entitled to a written explanation for the Father General's reversal of his initial decision. This explanation is to be held in strictest confidence; if the Father General wishes to make known the reasons for the decision to the Society in general, he will do so. No member is to make the contents of the explanation public in any manner whatsoever.

G. The Society shall elect an Episcopal Protector for pastoral care, teaching, and encouragement as also for oversight and accountability. The Members may choose to nominate one or more candidates and vote on an Episcopal Protector, they may wish to consult until they have a plenary consensus, or they may choose to delegate this choice to the Father General, who will naturally consult with his Advisory Council and others as to his choice. The Episcopal Protector may serve for a stipulated term, mutually agreed upon, or indefinitely, again with mutual agreement between himself and the Father General, representing the Society.

III. Chapters and Deans

A. The Local Chapter

1. A Chapter shall consist of all members: lay, clergy, or those who have committed themselves to a particular calling or ministry, active and retired, within a specified geographical region. The purpose of a Chapter meeting is three-fold: a) fellowship, prayer, and mutual encouragement; b) discussion of matters laid before it by the Father General; and c) continuing education. The Chapter shall be administered by the Dean.
2. The Chapter shall meet six to nine times per year. There should be no meeting in Advent/Christmas nor during the month of Passion Week/Easter.
3. Meetings of the Chapter may take place in the same location or different locations, as is best decided by members of the Chapter.
4. The Father General may call a meeting of the Chapter in order to gain its mind on a decision facing the Society. He may do this physically or by e-mail.
5. The Father General is *ex officio* the presiding officer of every Chapter.

C. The Deans

1. The Dean of each Chapter is a senior clergyman who has the responsibility to a) call meetings of the Chapter in a timely manner, perhaps designating a particular day for a meeting; b) set the agenda for the meeting; and c) work with the host community or communal expression (if it is not his own community) to ensure that items necessary to the meeting will be furnished.
2. The Dean may lead worship at the meeting (either at the Daily Office or the Eucharist, if there is one) or he may designate another member to do so.

3. The Dean shall preside at the discussion of Society matters and submit to the Father General a transcript or report of the discussion, with any summary conclusions or recommendations.
4. The selection of the Dean is made by the Father General from a list of nominees submitted privately from members of the Chapter. The Father General shall choose as seems best to him, and no member is guaranteed the office by physical age, seniority of service, size of community, administrative abilities or other natural talents, although these qualities should all be taken into account in the selection of a post of such responsibility.
5. The Dean shall serve for a fixed term of five years, unless he resigns or retires, or is removed from office for offenses proven in an ecclesiastical trial.
6. The appointment of the sitting Dean may be renewed indefinitely, in increments of five years. The sitting Dean has the right of refusal of renewal, to be expressed in writing to the Father General and his Chapter in the last year of his current term.
7. In accordance with standard Anglican usage, all Deans are styled “The Very Reverend Father....” and are entitled (although not required) to wear a black cassock with amaranth buttons and trim.
8. Upon retirement from the office of Dean, the clergyman reverts to his simple status of “Father....” and wears a plain black cassock (unless he has been named a Canon Extraordinary by the Father General upon his retirement, in which case his style is The Very Reverend Father... and he may continue to wear the trimmed cassock).

D. Other Ecclesiastical Officers: Canons

1. Although it is the desire that the Father General know each and every one of his clergy personally and intimately, the time will come when this will not be feasible. He will need assistants to help him to oversee various ministries.
2. The Canons assist the Father General in whichever ways he might require.
3. In accordance with standard Anglican usage, both Canons are styled “The Very Reverend Father....” and are entitled (although not required) to wear a black cassock with amaranth buttons and trim.
4. Upon retirement from the office of Canon, the clergyman reverts to his simple status of “Father....” and wears a plain black cassock (unless he has been named a Canon Extraordinary by the Father General upon his retirement, in which case his style is The Very Reverend Father... and he may continue to wear the trimmed cassock).

E. Other Ecclesiastical Officers: Canons Extraordinary

1. The Father General may grant the title of Canon Extraordinary to a clergyman who has served long and/or with great distinction.
2. This is an honorary status, entitling the bearer to the style and cassock of a canon, but having no duties attached to it.

IV: The Missionary Society General Assembly

A General Assembly shall be held every year. The Father General shall call for such an assembly and make the Assembly known as to its location, date and agenda. The primary focus of the Assembly shall be holy fellowship, worship and encouragement. Changes to the Rule of Life, Canons and By-laws may be presented for approval as necessary. The financial reports shall be openly reported. The assembly shall hear reports on the mission and ministry of the Society.

- A.**—Every vowed member in attendance is entitled to voice and vote in all matters pertaining to the Society’s affairs.
- B.**—A quorum shall consist of 60% of the vowed membership. The Father General shall chair the Assembly. The Secretary of the Assembly shall certify the quorum as meeting or failure to meet the 60% rule of all potential delegates. Minutes shall be recorded of all business meetings of the Assembly.

Canon Three: Ministries of and within the Society

Summary: It is within the very core ethos of the Society to establish, build, and bless effective ministries that extend God’s kingdom of grace and share the Gospel by word and deed.

I. The Structure of MSJ Ministries

- A.** The Father General of the Society shall register all ministries and grant approval for their operation. No ministry shall operate within the Society without the Father General’s express written permission.
- B.** The Father General is *ex officio* a member of the governing board of any ministry.
- C.** Ministries may be chaired by lay officers or clergy as best befits the administration of the ministry.
- D.** Each ministry shall write a mission statement, by-laws and operational procedures manual, and shall submit such documents to the Father General’s office within six months of the inception of the ministry.

E. Ministries shall submit financial reports to the Society office on a schedule determined by the Father General.

F. The Father General may request an audit of the ministry's books at any time.

G. All ministries shall be conducted within the doctrine, discipline and worship as this Society has received them.

H. An MSJ Member may be involved in, even direct a ministry which is not affiliated with the Society. In such case, said ministry is responsible to its own hierarchy and governance.

Canon Four: On Doctrine

Summary: The Missionary Society seeks for theology to be not only an intellectual assent, but a living experience with the Holy Trinity and the Church. The Church affirms the Holy Scriptures as the inspired, inerrant Word of God.

I. The Authority of Holy Scriptures

A. The Missionary Society recognizes the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the inspired, inerrant Word of God.

B. Scripture is to be understood in light of apostolic tradition and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

C. Where Scripture does not speak, we defer to apostolic tradition, as expressed in the Seven Ecumenical Councils of the undivided Church, with a deep appreciation of the theological and liturgical insights of the Caroline Divines of 17th century England.

II. The Essential Unity of the Church

In earnest anticipation for a future revelation of the fullness of the unity of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church, the Society adheres to these articles of unity exemplified by the undivided Church during the first millennium:

A. The Sacred Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the written Word of God, the chief witness to apostolic teaching, the source of the Church's nourishment and strength.

B. The Apostles' Creed as the Baptismal Symbol; and the Nicene Creed as the sufficient statement of the Christian faith.

C. The Seven Sacraments of the Church, including: Baptism, Eucharist, Confirmation (or Chrismation), Confession (or Reconciliation), Holy Matrimony, Holy Orders, and Unction. That Holy Baptism and Holy Communion are to be received by all Christians is a proper distinction as the Sacraments of Christ.

D. The Historic Episcopate in Apostolic Succession, the gift of Christ's authority to the Church and the trustee of the Church's fidelity to apostolic teaching. In doing so, the MSJ adheres to the catholic faith and order of the undivided Church, including the ontological necessity of a male priesthood and episcopacy.

III. The Spirit of Theology

A. The Society recognizes that doctrine is not only intellectual assent, but is also a living relationship with Almighty God and His Church.

B. It is incumbent upon the leadership of the Society to develop and maintain an atmosphere for growth and understanding in theology and doctrine. We adhere to the classic statement of ecumenical understanding and dialogue: "In essentials unity, in nonessentials liberty, in all things charity." While celebrating the diversity within orthodoxy, we also strive to avoid a schismatic spirit which would elevate nonessential or non-consensual beliefs and practices above the Father's will that there be a spiritual and visible unity of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.

C. The Society recognizes the XXXIX Articles of Religion as important historical documents.

Canon Five: On Catholic Concord

Summary: It is the desire of the Missionary Society to have dialogue with all Christian bodies everywhere, and to enjoy fellowship with those bodies which hold to the catholic faith. We commit ourselves to the prayer of Jesus in John 17, that the Church may be one. Also, in accordance with the usage of the undivided Church, the Society does not allow its members to belong to "secret societies."

I. Ecumenical Dialogue

A. Dialogue and Fellowship

Recognizing that God desires unity and concord among His people, the Society shall be committed to nurturing such relationships with other Christian bodies and sharing with them the riches of Christ in His Church.

II. On Membership in Secret Societies

Summary: Secret Societies are contrary to the witness of Holy Scriptures and the Church, and members of the Missionary Society may not hold membership in such societies, even though they may be civilly beneficial.

A. A Secret Society is a lodge, club, association or society that requires its members to make sacred vows, oaths, or obligations and invoke secret practices or espouse information not allowed for public distribution.

B. The Word of God is clear in its repudiation of such practices, calling upon believers to avoid oaths and secrecy (Ex. 20.3,4; Mt. 5.33-37; James. 5.12; Col. 2.8,18-22). Further, the Word of God does not accept any universality of brotherhood or sisterhood except through creation and redemption.

C. The Church has consistently stood against membership in such societies, believing such organizations to offer a counter-Christian world view, substituting a new state of things drawn from naturalism. The Church Catholic has stood upon the conviction that such societies openly transgress the First and Second Commandments of God.

D. Membership in the Society is inconsistent with membership in secret societies. The Society calls for its Members to abstain from membership in secret societies. Members of such societies shall, in the presence of a priest, renounce their previous vows before being received into the Society through the Society's Vow of Membership.

Canon Six: On Amendments

Summary: The Canons of the Missionary Society may be amended by the delegates of the Society, meeting in General Assembly.

I. Recommended amendments of the canons may be presented by any member to the Dean, who shall review the proposed amendments with the local Chapter. Such amendments as are approved by the local Chapters shall be presented to the Society Office no later than 90 days before the scheduled General Assembly.

II. The Father General and his Advisory Council shall vet the proposed amendments for suitability, redundancy, frivolity, and order of importance; and set the agenda of amendments for the General Assembly.

III. The delegates of the Society, meeting at the General Assembly, shall consider the recommended amendments for discussion and affirmation.

IV. The delegates of the Society, meeting at the General Assembly, shall seek consensus on any proposed amendment to the canons. In the event that consensus is not unanimous, an amendment shall be adopted by a three-fourths affirmation of the delegates present.

Certification

*I do hereby certify these documents
as those approved at General Assembly 2011
by the delegates of
The Missionary Society of St John the Evangelist*

*+Frederick G. Fick, Bishop
Father-General, MSJ*

of the Society

Document One: Membership Vow

(Oct. 2009)

I, _____, in the presence of God the Holy and Undivided Trinity, the Ever-Blessed Virgin Mary, St. John the Evangelist, all the saints, and this company here present, do vow my life and my service to Christ within the calling and the charism of The Missionary Society of St. John the Evangelist. Amen

Document Two: Bishop and Father General Frederick Fick's Vision: The Missionary Society of St. John the Evangelist: its Roots, its Calling, its Place in the Church.

(Oct. 2009)

What is a Missionary Society? It is the people of God who have heard the Master's Call. In the end, whether it was the Macedonian Call, the Call to the Jesuits to evangelize the New World, or the Call to missionary work that drove the Anglicans of the past to take the Gospel around the world, it is the Call of the missionary. So, that is what makes us a society of missionaries. We respond to the Call. We hear, we go and work today. It's the Call. A unique aspect, a very special aspect of who we are and what we are, who we have been and will be, God willing, even long after our deaths, is this profound sense of Divine Call. It was the Call that drew us into catholic life from our various and sundry evangelical pasts. We followed that Call into the Charismatic Episcopal Church, and attempted to live it to its fullest in that context. It was also this Call that caused us to say to the CEC: We MUST move on, toward the center of the Church Catholic and within that stronger and more stable expression of the Faith, rebuild healthier, more open lives (both our own and the lives of our people), and then roll up our sleeves to fulfill the Call that God has laid upon us from the beginning.

It was the Call that caused us to take off our collars, put on our jeans and build our own churches, sometimes remodeling buildings or building them from scratch. Pouring foundations, raising walls, laying tile, putting in sheet rock and wiring late into the night, working side by side with our parishioners. It was the Call that caused our priests to do this job in addition to their regular "secular" work week. It is the Call that drives us to do incredible things without benefit of finances, endowments, or pension funds.

It is the Call that sends us to the streets, to prisons, and to Africa. It is the Call that makes a Fr. Francis sleep on dirt and eat fish heads in sweltering heat to train and equip lay leaders and clergy in Africa for five and six weeks at a time. It is the Call that allows poor, hard working people to financially support these African teaching missions, and to have him know that they are with him as much in their prayers as in their financial support. They have heard the Call as clearly as he has, and they have responded in faith, sacrificially.

Our guys, at least many of them, attended seminary, at their own cost, on their own time, some while working full-time. We built our parishes from absolute scratch. Everything we are and everything we do is done because we are driven by the Call of God upon our lives. Sensitive to the Holy Spirit in a special way, we have been fools for Christ and His Church.

We began as refugees from the Charismatic Episcopal Church. I used to balk at that. No more. We exist because we cannot deny our common history, our common dreams of Spirit-filled, evangelical Catholic worship. We are different, because we have traveled different paths, lived different lives from the others from The Episcopal Church or the Anglican Continuum or elsewhere. We are the result of a brotherhood, a common view of a PEOPLE-first, Spirit-first, Catholic-first, kind of focus.

We are different. Not necessarily one bit better than any other Christian or any other Anglican, but we are unique. Ten to fifteen years of traveling our path, living OUR lives has produced this. It is what it is.

We are grateful for our reception into Forward in Faith, North America, and through their good offices, into the Missionary Diocese of All Saints of the Anglican Church in North America. We are Anglicans. We are “classic High Anglican” in our theology and hearts. We treasure all that has been “good, true, and beautiful” in the rich history of Anglicanism, but particularly the thought, sermons, prayers, and example of life of the seventeenth century Caroline Divines, of such godly men as Lancelot Andrewes, Mark Frank, John Donne, and George Herbert. We also treasure the example of the Church Missionary Society, which inspired young priests, including Frs. Henry Martyn and William Henry Temple Gairdner, as well as Frs. John and Charles Wesley and their circuit-riding heirs, to travel to distant continents, to preach the Gospel and to celebrate the Sacraments, according to the Book of Common Prayer, especially those who left distinguished careers at Oxford or Cambridge because they too heard the Call.

As a Missionary Society, our approach to clergy education and training is a bit more flexible than the traditional models. We have many priests who have received residential seminary training, many who studied in non-residential seminary or directed distance-learning programs, and some who undertook a strenuous Reading for Holy Orders program under proper academic and ecclesiastical supervision. We have a substantial number of M.Divs, M.As, M.Mins, and even a Ph.D. or two among us. But our passion for preaching the Gospel affects our *economia* regarding the "right" education and training for ministry of our ordained clergy. For some that has been (and will continue to be for most) attending a traditional seminary, but for others, the Lord's road has not been through a formal seminary, but in a life of anointed ministry, sometimes decades of it. Walking with God, bringing people to Jesus, training them up in righteousness, and living the private life of a humble servant while at the same time doing very public ministry. Our educational program for these veterans of the mission field is to see that they are deeply grounded in any area which they may have missed out on in their initial education. Nevertheless, these men are us too, and we will continue to welcome them, equip them as the saints they are, and send them out again with a firmer foundation in the Church and fresh fire for "The Gospel in the Catholic Church." (*ref. Abp. Michael Ramsey's fine book of the same title*)

This next section is admittedly a part of our past, but is also central to "getting" who we are and is a huge part of our future, a future which is built upon the past but which promises more than we now experience or can even envision in terms of ministry and unity. What we draw on is our past, but our individual pasts and our common past is more than our experience in the Charismatic Episcopal Church, and we have just begun to use the lessons of the past to point toward a future. It has been a rough road for us personally as indeed, everything we have done these past almost three years has been not only to heal our guys, as we could, from the past, but also to push, shove, and kick ourselves into the future. That future will contain new forms of ministry, in areas that some of us never dreamed we could penetrate, but always carrying the life-changing Gospel to the diverse cultures and circumstances into which Christ will lead us. First, and let's face this head on, we are Gospel-centered. At the beating heart of the MSJ is the saving Gospel of Christ: a full gospel of repentance from sin, belief in Christ's saving work on the Cross accomplished for all men for all time, personal confession of that saving faith, the Sacrament of Baptism, the reception of the Holy Spirit, and a life of making manifest the divine nature which we have been made partakers of through the mercy of God (2 Peter 1:4) and assisted by the grace and power of the Sacraments; a life of passion for Christ as Savior and Lord –and his Great Commission, of growth in personal holiness, and of corporate mission and celebration of the Mysteries of the

Church, anticipating the Day when the whole Church, united once again, shall rejoice and be fed at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb!

Likewise, we are Spirit-filled. We cannot dodge that either. No, we are expressly NOT Pentecostal nor what the Charismatic Movement has evolved into either. We are Prayer Book Catholics, worshiping liturgically “in spirit and in truth.” Our worship is expressly Spirit-filled, as is our preaching and our entire ministry, in every way imaginable. We are Bible-people too. We really are. We draw upon it as the mold for our thoughts, quote it in our daily conversations, and preach it in a fashion unlike many others in the Anglo-Catholic world. We love the Word of God and cannot live without it; it is food and drink to us, as necessary to us as our next breath. We try to avoid the Three-Stream designation and yet, we cannot avoid the reality that most of us began as evangelicals and charismatics traveling “the Canterbury Trail.” We will likely continue to draw those making a similar journey, and I like that about us.

Also, the MSJ is a community-centered Society. Our missionary effort, held by lay and clergy alike, is driven to take the Gospel, not just with our lips but in our lives, to the ends of the earth. Because we are missionary, we do have formal and semi-formal communities, communal expressions, and home groups, yes. But much more, because we are a Society within the Church Catholic, we are very limber, much more able to move quickly and decisively in ministry, especially in places where the Gospel has long been dead in the local churches or in places where there are no churches. This accurately describes the “quick response” and flexibility which characterizes a Missionary Society over a fixed structure such as a diocese: we are behind prison walls in Kentucky; we are on the streets of Cleveland; we go to Africa; we go wherever the Call requires us to. We *are* missionary. We run. We teach. Along the way, we pray our offices, we celebrate the Eucharist, we catechize, we baptize, we prepare people for confirmation at the hands of our Episcopal Protector: all the usual “church” stuff, but our members are much more likely to be those who have never tried Christianity or who have tried the structured, formal church and may never have experienced what they receive from our missionaries: a passion for Jesus and the Gospel of Salvation that not only redeems, restores, and transfigures their lives, but makes them hungry, bursting to tell others what Jesus has done for them through the power of His Word and Sacraments.

We make missionaries of our people, because the same fire of the Spirit that has fallen on us falls upon them, and they can’t help it. We are prayer warriors. Some go, some pay the freight, some provide the seed, some buttress with prayer. Are not all missionaries? We have teachers who minister

to their students by modeling both compassion and integrity in the classrooms of their schools. Is such a one a missionary? Yes! In the MSJ he or she is. This person might not be recognized as such in the formal, structured church, but as an MSJ? Right down our alley. We now have as many "ministries" as we do communities and other forms of MSJ life. I hope we always have this kind of balance. Yes, it is strange, but it is what one would expect from various types of people drawn together by the Spirit from diverse pasts and experiences, from different church bodies and ministry endeavors into the one vision of the MSJ.

Some may wish to describe us as a Missionary Society that merely specializes in the least, the lost, and the lonely. Our calling is that, but larger than that. Yes, we are on the streets, behind prison walls, at the hospice, and at the homeless shelter. We do all that. We indeed go to the poor in Africa. But we are more than that. We try our best to be "in the world, but not of the world." We have "normal" communities filled with families and married couples and single folks, normal people. Praise God, we do. We would be sorely impoverished if we were merely isolated individuals trying to help the least, the lost, and lonely. We love the Church, her doctrine and her worship, we love God's people, we love the Gospel, we love the Word of God, we love the Sacraments and how they restore and transform the lives of the lost, "and such were some of us" who have had our lives changed through the Spirit-empowered Sacraments. And we can take them into places where the institutional church has not always taken them. Only a mobile society like the MSJ, neither a diocese nor a structure like it, can do what we are doing. God has confirmed us in what we doing, who we are doing it with, and to the people we are reaching.

I believe that two passages in St. Luke's Gospel are central to who we are. Luke, chapter ten, verse two speaks of harvesters (as does John 4: 35ff), and missionaries are harvesters of the seed God has sown in the hearts of those hungry for him. Harvesters of clergy? Yes, to some degree, but more so harvesters of real people, real folks, wherever they may be and wherever our missioners find themselves. But the context of our work, our harvesting, is found in Luke, chapter four, where Christ announces to the people of his home town the Call laid upon him: "*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord*" (vv. 18-19).

That is the context of the Calling of the MSJ. The fields are white unto harvest, the Master declared, pray therefore that the Lord of the harvest send forth MSJ's into his field.

+ Frederick G. Fick
25 July 2009
Feast of St. James the Apostle

Document Three: The Covenant of Unity, joining the Missionary Society of St. John with the Missionary Diocese of All Saints, ACNA. (June 2010)

In The Name of the Father,
the Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

In devotion and commitment to the Lord’s call to unity in the Body of Christ, the Missionary Diocese of All Saints of the Anglican Church in North America, and the Missionary Society of St. John enter into this covenant as partners in the mission of our Lord Jesus Christ on this 27h day of June in the year of our Lord, Two Thousand and Ten.

The Missionary Society of St. John is received as a Religious Society in The Missionary Diocese of All Saints as set forth in the canon “Of Religious Orders and Other Christian Communities.”

The clergy and people of the Missionary Society of St. John are full members of The Missionary Diocese of All Saints and eligible to serve as officers and members of its council(s) as prescribed by the Canons of The Missionary Diocese of All Saints.

The Society will be spiritually and financially accountable to the Father General, the Bishop Visitor, and the Ordinary of The Missionary Diocese of All Saints and subscribe to the Canons of The Missionary Diocese of All Saints and the Anglican Church in North America.

Signed:

The Rt. Rev. William H. Ilgenfritz
Bishop,
The Missionary Diocese of All Saints

Signed:

The Rt. Rev. Frederick G. Fick
Bishop,
Missionary Society of St. John

Document Four: Statement of Purpose

(Oct. 2011; amended Oct. 2017)

Forward in Faith, North America

Be it resolved, that the purpose of *Forward in Faith, North America*, is to uphold the historic Faith, Practice and Order of the Church Biblical, Apostolic and Catholic, and to resist all efforts to deviate from it. To this end, *Forward in Faith, North America*, seeks to minister pastorally and sacramentally to all who are faithful to the Anglican Way, both within the Episcopal Church and outside it, while working internationally and cooperatively for the creation of an orthodox Province of the Anglican Communion in North America. (*The Declaration of Common Faith and Purpose of Forward in Faith, N.A. is given below*)

DECLARATION OF COMMON FAITH AND PURPOSE

In the name of the Holy and Undivided Trinity: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

I, _____, a Lay Member/Religious/Deacon/Priest/Bishop and my spouse,

_____, a Lay Member/Religious/Deacon of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church, affirm the following so that the faithful witness to apostolic Faith and catholic Order may be continued within the Churches of Anglican heritage.

1. I believe our Lord Jesus Christ has given His Church an Order which claims the loyalty of faithful Christians above and beyond any deviation sanctioned by any humanly-invented institution, whether secular or ecclesiastical.
2. I accept the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament as “containing all things necessary to salvation,” and as being the rule and ultimate standard of faith and morals.
3. I accept the Apostles’ Creed as the Baptismal Symbol; and the Nicene Creed as the sufficient statement of the Christian faith.
4. I accept the historic episcopate, locally adapted in the methods of its administration to the varying needs of the nations and peoples called of God into the Unity of His Church. I affirm the Christian ministerial priesthood as male, and that the churches of the Anglican Communion have no authority to change the historic tradition of the male priesthood. I pray that God grants

me the strength and ability to uphold the Church’s Order, both materially and spiritually as concerns the ministerial priesthood of His holy Church. Accordingly, I will reject any and all actions that might signify acceptance of a deviation from the Church’s Order regarding the Christian ministerial priesthood.

5. I recognize the seven Sacraments of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church – Baptism and the Supper of the Lord – ministered with unfailing use of Christ’s words of institution and of the elements ordained by Him, Confirmation, Matrimony, Ordination, Reconciliation of a Penitent, and Unction of the Sick.

6. I believe that, in the Sacrament and mystery of the Holy Eucharist, Jesus Christ is truly, really and substantially present in the Body and Blood in the outward and visible sign of Bread and Wine. (cf. 1 Cor. 10:16-17, 11:23-29, John 6:32-71)

7. I affirm our Lord’s teaching that the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony is in its nature the exclusive, permanent and lifelong union of one man and one woman.

8. I believe all Seven Councils are ecumenical and catholic on the basis of the received Tradition of the ancient Undivided Church of East and West.

9. I affirm that God, and not man, is the creator of human life. Believing that the unjustified taking of life is sinful, I will promote and uphold the sanctity of life from conception to natural death.

In making this Declaration, I accept all the responsibilities which pertain to the common witness of all who participate in this endeavor and I ask God’s blessing upon our labors.

Signature _____ Date _____

Spouse Signature _____ Date _____

Having signed this Declaration, I hereby apply for Membership/Associate Membership in Forward in Faith, North America.

Document Five: Bishop and Father-General Frederick Fick’s Statement on Renewing Our Vision.

(December, 2013)

My brothers and sisters of the Missionary Society of St. John,

Following our Society gathering at Liberty in October 2013, it became clearly evident that our Rule of Life and Canons did not focus solely upon the Society as truly a “religious society.” The original Rule and Canons had been written with many aspects of a para-diocesan paradigm included, a necessity of the time period during which they were first written. This paradigm was made obsolete by the Covenant between the MSJ and the Missionary Diocese of All Saints (MDAS) of the ACNA receiving the MSJ officially as a Missionary Society, a religious society. Thus, we needed a “pruning and clarification” of the Rule and Canons to bring them up to the current reality. As Father General, I appointed a Working Group comprised of Frs. Reid Wightman, Francis Wardega, and Rusty Matheny to take on this task of clarifying the Rule, removing any references to parishes. Such language was now arcane and inaccurate. With the elimination of all language reflecting parishes and missions, it became clear that revision and clarity was needed to describe life in the MSJ as it may be lived in the present and future in houses, communities and the like.

But it is equally important that we re-focus our hearts and spirits, as much as our structures and ministries, from a para-diocesan/parish-oriented perspective to that more of a true “religious society,” along the lines that other traditions have understood that term. We need to “renew our vision,” not merely of what we are but who we are. We are not “diocesan,” by and large, although we are related to the Missionary Diocese of All Saints and our parish churches are now wholly “diocesan churches.” But other groups are not parishes, not even really missions, but groups who have “grown together,” almost as “extended family groups” who gather faithfully for service and worship. But if our groups have grown closer together, our eyes of ministry have turned much further than the “parish boundary.”

Fr. Bob Lemmon expressed his experience this way:

If I were to try to define what I mean if I say that Christ the King is an MSJ community, I think I would have to say something like this: We are united by the ethos and Rule of the MSJ (membership) and a shared vision for ministry in this county. In our case we want to evangelize and disciple, by providing educational opportunities, at little or no cost to the student, and provide a safe and stable place for individuals and families to grow in the Lord Jesus

Christ through sacramental worship. So yes we have a worship service, but we also offer tutoring in many subjects and vocational skills. We work and we pray.

This is in my view the important distinction. that the “church” or Eucharistic community exists for the members engaged in this mission. Here's the thing, evangelization and discipleship, is a given based on the Rule of Life. Our particular mission/vision is a tool of evangelization and discipleship. 13 years ago when we started out I thought I was planting a church. But had I been church planting, I would have had to roll it up, and try again somewhere else 8 to 10 years ago, (depending on your church growth theory) I understand now that my philosophy of ministry was all wrong for church planting. I saw myself/family as planted here, and committed my life to be the priest for this community, not just my church members, but nonmembers, non-goers, unbelievers, Mennonites, Baptists, building contractors, construction workers, cabinet buyers—everyone within my reach. Many of these folks don't even know it, and wouldn't use that language. I'm in it for the long haul. You can't even get to know people, let alone earn their trust in 3 to 5 years. It's the mindset not of a church planter but a missionary.

And Fr. Reid Wightman expressed much the same thing about his own setting:

I am 100% of Fr. Bob's mind in what it means to "be the presence" rather than to "plant a church". My "congregation" is everyone in this city (and a fair number beyond), whether they know it or not. I am who I am, and that cultivation of "the presence of Christ" in my own life as the primary form of evangelism is what I think links us to the original Society of St. John the Evangelist (the Cowley Fathers).

Both Fr Bob comments and Fr Reid's reply reflect my own journey and my own thinking. When I retired from parish ministry some 5 years ago, after doing it with an all consuming passion for almost 36 years, it has taken a lot of time to put into words my own thoughts and reflections. I consider this neighborhood to be my mission and this greater civic community. I am a Christ-person to them, at whatever point I make contact.

It represents FOR ME, a radical change from the eye glasses I wore (church growth) because I had spent too much time learning to develop what Fuller called "church growth eyes". I had dialed that in, with focus, for so long it has taken time to stop doing that and embrace a monastic world view and ministry. It is liberating and refreshing to my mind and soul. It is simply different, not one better than the other.

I also believe it takes a group of people years to develop their ethos in a religious society. Clearly the vision and example of the 19th century Cowley Fathers (and many of them were not clergy at all but devout laymen and laywomen!) have had an impact on us. We were very aware of them when we changed our name ever so slightly to differentiate, yet pay homage to their original vision of “being Christ” wherever they found themselves.

A “religious society” is not a “monastic order.” It shares a certain “inner vision” of developing a personal and community Life in Christ, which is the determining priority of the “monastic outlook,” but it has also an “outward vision,” which looks at the world as it is and the needy people around us with the compassionate heart of the Savior. And each vision strengthens the other. The “inner vision” gives us a certain “detachment” from the political factions and the struggle for power we see so much of in both the church and the world; the “outer vision” gives us the strength to walk into those situations with a clear sense of Christ’s command to “go into all the world,” proclaiming the God’s redeeming Love and administering that Love with hands and hearts to real people desperately in need of seeing that Good News lived out in practical ways.

A vital aspect of our Society are those MSJs who are now part of a diocesan structure or even “labor in another part of the vineyard” that is the Church Catholic and Apostolic. By their “status,” they are committed to their proper authority (either diocesan or in another tradition of the Church), but in their hearts they remain committed to the ethos and vision of the MSJ. They remain very dear to the Society as a whole and their gifts and labors on behalf of the Society enrich us all. They bring ideas and perspectives to the re-focusing of our Vision which we do well to listen to with great care. As a deacon, in his ordination, vows to “bring the concerns of the world to the Church,” so they bring the concerns of the wider Church to the Society. They are God’s gift in our midst.

Although now called to serve the Lord in other areas of His Vineyard or to retire from public ministry, although never the ministry of prayer and intercession, these men and women have walked with the Society since before the days of its formal Founding 2006 to the 2009 convocation in Fort Worth which drew up our original Rule of Life. (The founding of the MSJ actually took place when a dozen folks met at St John the Apostle and signed the original charter on the Feast of St Nicholas some 8 years ago, Dec. 6, 2006. The approximately three years from the signing of that original charter signing, on down to the approval of our first Rule on Oct. 27, 2009, in Ft Worth, were the “years of gathering and formation”, “the Founding Years” and we acknowledge those who took vows to the Society

during that period as "founding members.") These have been such members, dedicated by their service, their thoughtful counsel, and by diligent love from that "formation time." As the Lord Himself designated The Twelve out of His many disciples, those who had "walked with Him from the beginning," so the Society is pleased to confer the title "Founding Member" in recognition of their faithful service to us at in our early and uncertain days.

We recognize that there are still active Members, faithful to their service in the Society, who share the same distinction of "having been there at the beginning," and when they retire from active ministry or find themselves called by God to serve elsewhere in a part of the Church Catholic and Apostolic, they shall also receive this same honor. But now, as we transition from what we once were to what we see before us, we wish to recognize and honor those who, for good and godly reasons, have committed themselves to the episcopal authority of the diocesan structure or who have had to leave the Anglican Tradition in which the Society is firmly rooted and growing, and we wish to express our gratitude for their past contributions and to recognize the reality of their present service outside the Society while still maintaining in their hearts and lives their on-going commitment to the MSJ ethos and vision. They will ever be a part of us and most welcome in the councils of the Society as they have ever been, especially in this period of renewing our missionary vision and envisioning new ways to live it out as a true "religious society."

This renewal and re-focusing of our paradigm of a "religious society" (neither a parish church nor a monastic order) is something that we will all have to "grow into" and explore. What we are at present is NOT defined nor do I think we will have a good idea of that "definition" for a good 5-10 years, so the language of the this revision is "open enough" that it can cover the present variety of our expressions of ministry and some expressions of ministry and life together as "Communal Expressions" that we have not really lived to the full yet, some we may not have even thought of yet! My thought is "Let the MSJ grow a bit, become more itself, explore its own life; then we'll write a definition." After all, St. Benedict wrote HIS Rule, the one from which almost all others in the West are derived, some 15-20 years after community life on Monte Cassino, selecting those things which described their life together and making that the standard, but ending with the provision, "if anyone can think of ways to improve on this little rule, let him do so to the profit of all."

Of course, there is a good dose of "uncertainty" to this idea of "living the life before we describe the life." We will make mistakes. We'll correct them when we do. We are "exploring," not "wandering around without a clue."

Houses, ministries and communities of the religious life have always wondered whether there would be novitiates and postulants come to live among them, adopt the faith and adopt the "life". We walk by faith even as all those before us. Parishes, dioceses and even entire provinces have faded from history as well. However, I do believe that there will always be those who desire to live out their Christian Faith in a community of committed believers, and we will be a place where these can find a "family in Christ" and a place for nurture and ministry, for continuity with past expressions and vision for the future.

One question that we will have to study and determine and, yes, "experiment with" is the question of leadership, and especially the parish idea that a community is ALWAYS headed by an ordained priest. Historically, this is not so. It's certainly assumed in the Rule of St. Benedict that there will be a priest or two in a community, but that the Father is likely not to be one of them. For some of us, that is a very unsettling idea. Just as unsettling as the question above about "where will we get new members?"

I believe there will always be those who are either living presently in community or those who come to live in community who provide leadership. Even if they do so as dedicated sisters who lead the offices of prayer, or dedicated brothers who do the same. Many communities have no priest resident, certainly few, if any, female ordered communities do. They receive sacraments from a visiting priest. Such may be the case that sympathetic nearby priests can and will provide for future communities in a similar way.

I believe that there will always be those whose desire to live in community FIRST rules their life of obedience to God. Then, among such may be a man who can be fitted to the priesthood, should the Lord call him in his heart. That inner call must come from the Holy Spirit. The training and academics? That can come. There will always be on-line seminaries, with once a month resident weekends required. These would be tailor made for a community guy seeking to prepare himself, with the Father General's guidance, for priestly ministry.

It is what will happen. The security of the future of the Church at large, all the way down to the smallest, hidden community, rests in the power, knowledge and love of God, the Holy Spirit, who in union with the Son, the Lord of the Church and the Omnipotent Father, who's will it is that all might come into the blessed unity of the Most Holy Trinity. There we place our trust.

+Frederick G. Fick

Explanatory Postscript Note ~

(June 2014)

Following our Society gathering at Liberty in October 2013, it became clearly evident that our Rule of Life and Canons did not focus solely upon the Society as truly a “religious society.” The original Rule and Canons had been written with many aspects of a para-diocesan paradigm included, a necessity of the time period during which they were first written. This paradigm was made obsolete by the Covenant between the MSJ and the Missionary Diocese of All Saints (MDAS) of the ACNA in which the MDAS received the MSJ officially as a religious society in accordance with the canons of the ACNA. The MSJ shares the vision of the MDAS. Thus, we needed a “pruning and clarification” of the Rule and Canons to bring them up to the current reality. The Father General appointed a Working Group comprised of Frs. Reid Wightman, Francis Wardega, and Rusty Matheny to take on this task of clarifying the Rule, removing any references to parishes. Such language was now arcane and inaccurate.

With the elimination of all language reflecting parishes and missions, it became clear that revision and clarity was needed to describe life in the MSJ as it may be lived in the present and future in houses, communities and the like.

As the work progressed, the weight of the task fell upon Fr. Reid, who constantly communicated with the Father General and then with the Father General Emeritus and Fr. Bob Lemmon in his capacity as Father General Coadjutor. Fr. Reid’s experience of life lived in community and his decades long study of Benedictine and Anglican communities made him the natural choice to be the single author of a coherent document, although with constant reference to the aforementioned Fathers General.

Consequently, Canons Three and Four were written to describe such structures as embodied the community ethos and to give them preliminary practical shape . These are provisional canons and subject to amendment and the usual ratification process at the General Assembly of 2015. But, for the present, they are “operating canons,” ones to be used and lived out to the best of our ability so that, when we gather in 2015, the proposed changes will reflect actual “life experience” and not “hypothetical improvements.” In that process, a record book should be kept to describe problems, how they were met, and did the attempted solution work. These record books will be invaluable when we meet in 2015 & 2016, as they will reflect “lived reality.”

A second observation on Canons Three and Four is that ALL groups are “voluntary” in nature. No MSJ is “forced” to form or to join a group. It is hoped that they will be places of faith and upbuilding fellowship, and so desirable places for the MSJ family to meet. But the groups here listed are also not exhaustive and other forms of “life together” may be found and tried and adapted. One instance is that “Local Fellowship,” which meets when it can and for the simple purposes of fellowship as its members are busy with ministries of their own which take up the majority of their time. The ONLY stipulation in such situations is that the Father General be kept informed of the formation, life, practices, and developments or changes of the group. Thus, the whole of the Society can be informed and enriched by the experience of smaller parts of it.

Finally, recognizing the valuable contributions of Members whose primary obedience is now to a diocesan authority (as such), whether that authority is Anglican, Roman, or Orthodox, these Companion Members (those not living in an MSJ community or communal expression as their primary form of Christian life) retain their seat, voice and vote in the General Assembly for as long as they choose to do so.

The work done in this Provisional version of the Rule and Canons (with the exceptions of Canons Three and Four) is that of pruning away all parochial & diocesan language and clarifying other portions in accordance with our renewed vision as a religious society. There is more strenuous work ahead and those portions will have a Note which states the difficulty or issue, in brief. These were “beyond the scope here delegated” and are properly the work done prior to the 2016 Assembly when those articles should be taken up and dealt with. They are matters which are going to take much time, reflection, conversation among ourselves and with others, and then even more time to reflect and come to the best solution possible. They were NOT pressing matters of the moment, but are noted in this text to be addressed at the proper time and in the proper method.

A “Rule” is ALWAYS “a work in progress,” just as “life together” is, and our hope is that this “provisional update & clarification” will be helpful and useful until we can gather again in 2016.

+Frederick G. Fick, Father General Emeritus

-on behalf of:

Fr. Bob Lemmon, Father General Coadjutor & Fr. Reid Wightman, MSJ

10 June 2014

Document Six: On Partnering in Ministry with other orthodox Christian bodies (Oct. 2009; am. 2013)

The Missionary Society of St. John seeks the unity of all orthodox Christians, with particular zeal for our brothers and sisters in the Anglican Communion. To that end the society may enter into ministry partnerships, as it has done with the Missionary Diocese of All Saints (ACNA) and Forward in Faith, North America (FiF-NA). The Society reserves the right to enter into other such partnerships with other orthodox Christian bodies, upon a two-thirds approval vote in Synod, the approval of the Father General, and the approval and blessing of the Society's Episcopal Protector.

Document Seven: On Proper Reverence in Liturgical Worship (Oct. 2009)

This section may be placed here in the appendices, considered as a section of Article Two of the Rule of Life: or considered as a corrective, perhaps not needed at present, but at some future date.

I. Proper Reverence

A. Worship, by its very nature, should be a journey into God. We do well to remember that God who loves us and gave his only-begotten Son for our salvation is, nevertheless, “a consuming fire.”

B. Our rejoicing in our salvation should be in remembrance of the life we have been saved from and our thanksgiving and adoration should be characterized also by an awe and reverence at the depths of divine love.

C. We should especially approach the Mystery of the Holy Eucharist with a mixture of love, adoration, and awe. From these spring proper rejoicing of the soul, and not mere emotionalism.

D. Emotional joy is also a gift of God and to be encouraged; yet also remembering that there may be others in the local body who are suffering at the same time that we are rejoicing. Our rejoicing should be such as lifts them up, encouraging them in the Lord, rather than causing feelings of guilt, inadequacy, or further burden to them. St. Paul admonishes us to “bear one another’s burdens,” and this is a time that we should be sensitive to others.

E. While proper rejoicing is always appropriate in the House of God, flippancy, irreverence, over-familiarity, and vulgar joking are an affront to God and his people, a despising of the great gift we have been given in

salvation, and, through our active participation in the Sacraments (our “means of grace,”) our transformation into the image of Christ (our “hope of glory”).

Document Eight: In Praise of the Divine Office

(The normal form of Christian daily prayer)

(Oct. 2009)

The Daily Office is the peculiar and unique treasure of Anglicanism. Through four and a half centuries it has been THE Prayer of the Church. When one considers that Archbishop of Canterbury Thomas Cranmer drew on the monastic offices of the Sarum usage, Cardinal Quiñones’ revision of the Roman Breviary, and prayers drawn from the patristic heritage of the Christian East, one can see that the Book of Common Prayer, and especially the Daily Office, or Divine Office as it is traditionally called, is truly the prayer of the Church Catholic, through the ages. For English-speaking peoples, it has been a steady companion, in times of national triumph and in times of civil or foreign wars, and natural disaster. During the Protectorate of Cromwell, when the Prayer Book was proscribed, faithful families gathered in secret to pray Morning or Evening Prayer “in the old way,” treasuring the Coverdale Psalms and the steady flow of Scriptural lessons for the day from the King James Bible (rather than the official Geneva Bible).

The Daily Office is flexible to circumstances and to preferences in devotion. It is read as the Sunday Service on ships of the British Navy in its simplest form, and the repetition of words of comfort and assurance become a portion of the sailor’s soul. It is celebrated in great collegiate chapels like those of King’s College, Cambridge and Keble College, Oxford, with splendor and incense and choirs chanting the psalms in antiphonal praise. It is celebrated in humble parish churches all over England and in her great cathedrals, most notably St. Paul’s in London and Westminster Abbey. The Daily Office is the Common Prayer of the Queen and of her people, and of Anglicans everywhere. Amid the doctrinal storms of the centuries, the Daily Office has offered continual strength and unity to all Anglicans who are faithful to pray to God through its psalms and lessons, its canticles and collects.

But why is the Daily Office so important as the first form of Christian Prayer for Anglican Christians? Why not Bible Study and “free prayer” or the Rosary or some other form? What is it about the Office that is so valuable to the spiritual health of the Christian? It is because the Office maintains the heartbeat of scriptural prayer, a ceaseless round of petition and praise, contrition and thanksgiving for “all things, great and small,” following the cycle of the Church Year, and thus leading the worshipper into the depths of

the Church's corporate prayer, while remaining intensely personal. With its lectionary and Collects for Week, as well as lessons and collect prayers for various festivals and saints' days, it is an inexhaustible treasure-house of prayer. Because it requires us to pray for "all sorts and conditions of men," for things beyond our own immediate experience or knowledge: national and international concerns, those in danger by reason of military service, travel or childbirth, those caught in the snare of sin or addiction, those suffering from illness or adverse family or economic circumstances, and many other things, we are carried far deeper into the love of God for his fallen Creation, and endued with new fire and fresh zeal for the day ahead as we meet the people whom God loves and calls us to love "not in word only, but in deed and in truth" (1 John 3:18).

The best way to pray the Daily Office is with time for brief reflection and personal prayer after each lesson or collect (adding some of the optional collects, printed later in the book) before resuming the Office, but if this is not possible, the words of the Psalms and the Scriptures come back to us in the course of the day and form our habit of thought and our reactions to the events of our lives.

For the lay Members, the Society encourages that prayers for the Society, for the Church and the World, be in the context of the Daily Office of Morning or Evening Prayer, but it also recognizes that not all people pray in the same way, and so there is liberty in the form of prayer, while the commitment to daily prayer remains firm. For clergy and religious, their ordination vows and religious vows obligate them to pray the Daily Office as their first form of prayer. Other forms of prayer or devotion—from "praying in tongues" to praying the Rosary or the Prayer Rope— are certainly appropriate although optional, in addition to (but not a substitute for) the Daily Office.

Document Nine: Pope Benedict XVI on the Future of the Church (2014)

A godly admonition from an "elder brother in the Lord"

"The church will become small and will have to start afresh more or less from the beginning.

She will no longer be able to inhabit many of the edifices she built in prosperity. As the number of her adherents diminishes...she will lose many of her social privileges...As a small society, [the Church] will make much bigger demands on the initiative of her individual members....

It will be hard-going for the Church, for the process of crystallization and clarification will cost her much valuable energy. It will make her poor and cause her to become the Church of the meek...The process will be long and wearisome as was the road from the false progressivism on the eve of the French Revolution — when a bishop might be thought smart if he made fun of dogmas and even insinuated that the existence of God was by no means certain...But when the trial of this sifting is past, a great power will flow from a more spiritualized and simplified Church. Men in a totally planned world will find themselves unspeakably lonely. If they have completely lost sight of God, they will feel the whole horror of their poverty. Then they will discover the little flock of believers as something wholly new. They will discover it as a hope that is meant for them, an answer for which they have always been searching in secret.

And so it seems certain to me that the Church is facing very hard times. The real crisis has scarcely begun. We will have to count on terrific upheavals. But I am equally certain about what will remain at the end: not the Church of the political cult, which is dead already, but the Church of faith. She may well no longer be the dominant social power to the extent that she was until recently; but she will enjoy a fresh blossoming and be seen as man's home, where he will find life and hope beyond death."

--from the 2009 book *Faith and the Future* by Pope Benedict XVI

Certification

*I do hereby certify these documents
as those approved and amended at General Assembly 2017
by the delegates of
The Missionary Society of St John the Evangelist*

*Most Rev. Fr. Bob Lemmon
Father-General, MSJ
27 October 2017
Liberty, Kentucky*

Notes

