1. Good morning. Let me begin by offering my appreciation, and that of this diocesan family, to St. Alban's, Harlingen, for the outstanding manner in which they are hosting us for this Council. Marilyn and Dave Osborn, co-chairs, and Scott Brown, Host Rector, and your entire team - many, many thanks.

2. I also want to thank our council coordinator, Nancy Stinson, and the diocesan staff for their faithful service for this Council. We are all blessed with their competence and dedication in this and all areas of diocesan life. And, of course, I want to thank Catherine, my partner in life and in this ministry, for her wonderful support and for the ministry which she undertakes in her own right with grace, energy, and faithfulness. Thank you, Catherine.

3. As I begin, I want to welcome Bishop Folts, 8th Bishop of West Texas, and his wife, Sandy. Also, a special word of welcome to our long time mission partners and friends, the Rt. Rev. Francisco Moreno, Presiding Bishop and Primate of the Province of Mexico and Diocesan Bishop of Northern Mexico, and his wife Pery; the Rt. Rev. Benito Juarez, Bishop of the Diocese of Southeast Mexico and his wife, Angelica; and the Rt. Rev. Lloyd Allen, Bishop of the Diocese of Honduras. I am also asking the Committee on the Bishop's Address, in their report on Saturday morning, to bring greetings on our behalf to our fellow dioceses in Province 7. Those dioceses
include Texas, Northwest Texas, Forth Worth, Dallas, Rio Grande, Oklahoma, Kansas, Western Kansas, Western Louisiana, Arkansas, and West Missouri.

4. In this address, I am going to discuss just a few of our diocesan ministries, give you an update on the transition between Bishop Reed and me, call for the election of a Bishop Suffragan, and then conclude with some personal remarks.

**Study of the Gospel of Luke appointed this year**

5. It continues to be my custom to invite, you - the diocesan family - to read and study a book of the Bible each year. In 2016, I am inviting you to read the Gospel of Luke, which is also the primary Gospel appointed for Sundays this year in the lectionary cycle of readings (Year C).

6. I encourage you to get familiar with Luke's Gospel in the coming months. And what I am really saying here is to get familiar with Jesus as his life and ministry unfolds in Luke's telling. You can participate in this in any number of ways, including weekday small groups, Sunday mornings, individual study and other opportunities. The Adult Christian formation team is planning more than one study focused on Luke this year, starting with a study on the Sunday readings from Luke during the Easter season. You will get more information about this soon. May you be blessed in your personal spiritual formation and in your discipleship in so doing.
Habitat for Humanity

7. As a reminder, in 2012 I invited the diocese to join together and build three Habitat for Humanity homes over a six year period. I asked, and continue to ask, each congregation in the diocese to contribute $300 per year over this six year period (2012-2017) to fund these homes.

8. Under the leadership and guidance of our Habitat Builders for West Texas, we have completed the first two of these three houses: first a home in Lockhart, then another in Seguin. Bishop Reed and I have worked on both homes, and I can happily report that in spite of this, they are still standing.

9. We are set to begin the third home this year, this time in Kerrville. Let me note here that we are a year ahead of schedule - and if we all continue to support this effort through 2017, we will be able to build four houses rather than three. Thanks be to God; and thanks be to you. And a special word of thanks to our Habitat Chair, John Badders, and our fine folks who make up the servant leadership of our Habitat Builders for West Texas.

Good Samaritan Community Services

10. The ministry of Good Samaritan Community Services continues to reach across the diocese, especially through the summer program known as "Camp Good Sam."
11. The goal of Camp Good Sam is to address the "summer slide" by giving economically disadvantaged youth a safe place to learn and have fun. Four key areas of focus define the program: supporting educational achievement; reducing risk factors for children during the summer; helping young people explore college and career pathways; and helping the participants grow in leadership development and learn about civic engagement.

12. In the summer of 2015, Camp Good Sam served six of our communities. Those sites included Pharr, Corpus Christi, Alice, Sonora, Wimberley, and San Antonio. Six years ago, we had one site, so it is easy to see the growth and impact this program is having in our communities and with our churches. What a wonderful way for our congregations to share in "the joy of the Lord." You will hear more about plans for the upcoming summer for Camp Good Sam when Good Samaritan makes their report later in this Council.

Camps and Conferences

13. We have the finest camping program in the United States, and that is no exaggeration. As we heard yesterday, our camps continue to serve many, many people in many, many ways. I am most grateful to Rob Watson who leads this ministry; and for all those who give so much of themselves to the people we serve and to these sacred places which we are blessed both to have and to share.

14. Personally, camping has been an extremely formative influence in my own life since I was 10 years old. More recently, I have been honored to chair the Episcopal Church's Advisory Council for camping. In addition, Catherine and I both continue to be involved
on the leadership group known as ECCC - Episcopal Camps and Conference Centers. It is a privilege to serve in this ministry.

15. Mustang Island Conference Center in Port Aransas, Duncan Park in Colorado, and Camp Capers in the Texas Hill Country, are recognized as innovative and outstanding facilities. Each is strong in its own right, and each, of course, has ongoing needs in its own right. We always have plans to strengthen our ministries and our facilities, and this is true for Mustang Island Conference Center as well as Duncan Park in Colorado. However, this morning I want to say a few words about Camp Capers.

16. We have just completed a new Activities Building at Camp Capers as you heard yesterday. This is a wonderful addition to the ministry at Camp Capers, and another step toward the goals of the Master Plan. I am delighted to tell you that we are going to name this new Activities Building in honor of, and in thanksgiving for, the ministry of Jim and Sandy Folts. Their years of service to West Texas have been extraordinary; and we are grateful for their service to several congregations in the diocese as well as their ministry in the bishop's office from 1994-2006. In addition, Camp Capers holds a special place in their hearts, as they met there in 1959. Several grandchildren later, here they are. Please join me in recognizing Jim and Sandy.

17. Let me say a word in strong support of the completion of the Master Plan at Camp Capers that Jeff Rochelle, Mollie Zachry and Rob Watson spoke of in yesterday's report from Camps and Conferences. Next up: a new dining hall. As reported, this final phase includes a goal of $4,500,000, which will fully fund all components of the Master Plan initiated in 2011. At this point, I am
very happy to inform you that we have already raised $1,050,000 of that amount, so we will be focused on raising the additional $3,500,000 this year. This is where you come in! Adding this final phase goal to the monies already given and the work completed since 2011, we will have invested over $10,615,000 for the current and future ministry which occurs in and through Camp Capers.

18. Taking the longer view, this is actually the final major piece of an effort begun in the mid-1990s under Bishops MacNaughton and Folts when new cabins, a new centrum (open sports court), a new crafts cabin, and a new swimming pool were added. Therefore, once the new dining hall is completed, every building on the Camp Capers campus (except the chapel which we want to leave as is) will have been remodeled or completely replaced in the last twenty years.

19. Taking the even longer view, I am very confident in saying that the completion of the Master Plan would really be a dream come true for Bishop Everett Jones, who served as Diocesan Bishop from 1943-1968. Prior to his election as Diocesan Bishop, he served four years as rector of St. Mark's, San Antonio. While we know that he did many wonderful things during his years as rector of St. Mark's, the only diocesan committee (that we know of) on which he served was the diocesan youth committee. Through his commitment to young people and through his unwavering efforts, we have Camp Capers, which opened in 1947.

20. Those first buildings were constructed from World War II surplus building materials. If you remember the original layout, cabins were scattered all over the place in no particular pattern because the criteria used to determine the locations was "a flat piece of turf." In addition,
the entire camp was built with volunteer labor. No, really. Now, you can help us do that again with the dining hall, or you can help us raise the needed funds to build it. Understood this way, maybe this will be the fastest $3,500,000 we have ever raised!

21. Yes, the completion of the Master Plan will be a remarkable achievement for Camp Capers, which observes her 70th birthday in 2017. A "Happy Birthday!" present, indeed; and a strong statement of our continued growth and our ongoing commitment to our camping ministry now and for generations to come. I want to express my deep appreciation to Jeff Rochelle, a member of the Diocesan Development Committee, who is chairing this effort.

22. I am particularly grateful to Mollie Zachry, who continues to lead our efforts as we complete the Master Plan. Her service to Camp Capers in thought, word, and deed, is a great blessing to you and me. Her work exemplifies the words of the Psalmist, who wrote so many years ago, "that the generations to come might know, and the children yet unborn...might put their trust in God..." (Psalm 78.6-7).

23. I invite your generosity and support for the new dining hall, and hope that you will number yourself as a contributor who helped complete the Master Plan. I will devote much of my remaining time in the bishop's office to doing all that I can to help us continue to provide outstanding facilities for our children, our families, our congregations, and all other groups who participate in our camping programs at Mustang Island Conference Center, Duncan Park, and Camp Capers.
24. Individuals and groups come to our camping facilities for spiritual formation in the image of Jesus Christ; for strengthening their discipleship as His followers; for fellowship with one another as we build up the Body of Christ; and in all things, ultimately, for the strategic integration of the Gospel in our daily life and work. Thanks be to God.

TMI - The Episcopal School of Texas

25. The Bishop of the Diocese serves as the Chair of the Board of TMI; and the diocese owns the school. It is a privilege to serve this excellent and historic institution, which was founded by Bishop Steptoe Johnston in 1893 under the name "West Texas Military Academy." As I have said on numerous occasions, it was Bishop Johnston who really established the "DNA" in this diocese for our many Episcopal schools.

26. TMI is underway with a major capital campaign at the present time, and Catherine and I are one of three couples who are serving as co-chairs. The purpose of the campaign is to build and strengthen our facilities and endowment funds. The major components of this $14,000,000-$17,000,000 effort are in the areas of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics - more universally known in the education world as "STEM."

27. Many of you have connections with TMI, and many of you are very involved and interested in Episcopal schools. We will need much support, from within the diocese as well as the TMI community and alumni, to be successful in our efforts. I will be glad to talk to those of you who would like to learn more about TMI and this
endeavor. I expect to spend a great deal of my time in the coming year focusing on expanding the strong foundation on which TMI stands and from which it educates servant leaders.

28. You will hear more about the ministry of TMI from the Headmaster, Dr. John Cooper, in his report this afternoon - which will include a brief overview of the elements of the capital campaign.

**Adult Christian Formation Initiative**

29. In 2013, I called for a renewed interest and energy for adult Christian formation in the diocese, and I asked John Lewis and Jane Patterson to take on the work as part of St. Benedict's Workshop, which they have been directing for several years.

30. They have developed special studies in Lent and Advent for the past two years and this year added an Epiphany study. They continue to write annual Bible studies and, as I mentioned earlier, will produce some studies on Luke this year. Other clergy and lay people from around the diocese have also been recruited to contribute to the studies.

31. All of these studies are designed for congregations as well as small groups and individuals.

32. I hope you are taking advantage of these opportunities for strengthening your own personal spiritual formation. A handout which will be on your tables later today tells you more about what is available on the Adult Christian Formation website, so please take a look at it.
**Sharing Faith Dinners**

33. I sometimes refer to a church as a "community of strangers," meaning that while we are acquaintances, we don't really know much about people with whom we regularly worship. The Sharing Faith Dinners provide a safe, enjoyable, and meaningful opportunity to get to know one another, to articulate our faith, and to build relationships in Christ.

34. This year's Sharing Faith Dinners and conversations are scheduled for Thursday, May 19. This is our fourth annual gathering. Several other dioceses, including at least one in Canada, will also participate in Sharing Faith Dinners on this same date.

35. At each dinner, a moderator invites participants to share stories of their faith journey through the use of printed questions that are drawn from a deck of cards. And this year, all participating dioceses will use the same cards.

36. Last year, we had excellent participation throughout the diocese at these dinners. Sharing Faith evenings give everyone the opportunity to get to know each other's faith story a bit better. I hope that you will participate this year; you'll be glad you did. If May 19 doesn't work for your congregation for some reason, please feel free to find a date that does.

**Coadjutor Transition**

37. When a diocese is in transition from a diocesan bishop to a bishop coadjutor, the canons of the church require the diocesan bishop to
assign areas of diocesan life and responsibility to the coadjutor. This is, of course, something I am happy to obey. Once given to the coadjutor, the diocesan cannot take those areas of ministry back - more canonical brilliance.

38. Last year, I indicated that Bishop Reed would have primary responsibility for clergy deployment, congregational development, and the ordination discernment process. In 2016, I have turned over a number of other things to the good bishop. It is not necessary for me to detail the exhaustive list here; but when you call our office, you will hear the frequent refrain, "You will have to speak to Bishop Reed about that."

39. It's not that I don't still have things to do. After all, I will continue the Bishop's Golf Tournament. Believe me, this requires extensive personal preparation, mainly on sunny afternoons; and, in my case, anger management counseling following the aforementioned preparation sessions.

40. On a more serious note, at Diocesan Council 2015 I charged the Standing Committee with developing a process for the election of a bishop suffragan in preparation for when I step down. Last year, I informed the Standing Committee that I will step down from the bishop's office in July, 2017. That means I have about 16 months to go.

41. In response to this, the Standing Committee met throughout 2015 and outlined a process for the election of a bishop suffragan, to be held at next year's Diocesan Council in Corpus Christi (February 25, 2017). The person elected will then join the diocesan office in
May/June in the role of bishop-elect, and will be ordained as a bishop on July 29, 2017, by the Presiding Bishop.

42. In my address last year, I said, "It will be the responsibility of the Standing Committee to undertake an evaluation of our previous election processes and consider what, if any, changes might be beneficial to the diocese in future Episcopal elections." This they have done.

43. The Standing Committee is going to present a resolution to you later during this Council outlining the process and timetable for the election. I ask that you support their resolution, as they have considered many factors and developed what I believe to be a fine process which works well for the diocesan family. You will also see that there are some new components to the election process, including "forums" during which the nominees will have a chance to speak and to which the diocesan family will be invited. Later in this Council you will also see a Ministry Moment about the ministry of the bishop suffragan, starring none other than three of our own who have served as bishop suffragan: Earl McArthur, Bob Hibbs, and David Reed.

**Personal Reflections**

44. Recently, I have been reading a little pamphlet entitled, "*A Round Robin, The Story of West Texas*. It is the story, as told by the Rev. A. W. S. Garden, about the earliest years of our diocese. As you may remember, our diocese first came into existence as "The Missionary District of Western Texas" in 1874. The pamphlet to which I am referring was published in June of 1915, only 40 years after our
"founding." Therefore, it gives us a glimpse into our earliest days. Some excerpts:

45. "The State, of which this diocese forms a part, has a peculiarly unique and interesting history. (He might not be the first to call Texas peculiar.)

46. "Texas has been under many flags, French, Spanish, Mexican, Texan, Confederate, and American.

47. "In 1874, the great State of Texas was cut into three diocesan divisions and Bishop Elliott, of blessed memory, became the first missionary bishop of Western Texas.

48. "When Bishop Elliott came, the district was practically without railroads, yet there was not a point of importance he did not visit. His first service was held Dec. 20, 1874 in a passenger car at Luling, which at that time was the western terminus of the Southern Pacific Railroad. (p3)

49. "No words can possibly convey an adequate idea of the splendid heroism of this truly remarkable man, or tell the real story of the permanent effect of his self-sacrifice and work for the Church in West Texas. Thirty years have passed (Bishop Elliott died at Sewanee in 1887 trying to recover his health), but his memory is yet fresh, and the name of the sainted Elliott is still a household word in thousands of Texas homes.

50. "When he arrived in the District, he found but six churches, three of which were unfinished, and two without services. Three of these
were destroyed by cyclone the following year. When his work was finished, thirteen years later, he left twenty-four churches, nine rectories, St. Mary's Hall in San Antonio, and Montgomery Institute in Seguin, both splendid and flourishing schools for girls.

51. "In one of his letters to friends in the East he gives a brief account of his work as follows; - "I started on my visitation, and travelled forty-eight miles in a buggy. We got stuck in a mud-hole and were tugged out by a benevolent stranger and his horse. Again we got stuck in the San Marcos River and could not get out before our valises were thoroughly soaked.

52. "A round trip of 1800 miles is necessary for a visitation to the military posts. But to visit a post where there has been no service for years, to baptize well grown children who have waited all their lives for the opportunity, to officiate to devout communicants who approach the altar for the first time in years, this is work meet for thanksgiving; but to say farewell, to know that, travel as I may, at least a year must pass before I return is hard indeed." (p4)

53. To paraphrase a bit more of the Rev. Mr. Garden's pamphlet: Conditions make West Texas, in a remarkable degree, the Church's land of opportunity. They yearn for a religion that is positive and definite...the opportunity for the Church is here.

54. I believe that, one hundred years after these words were penned, the opportunity for the Church - the Body of Christ - is still here. The word opportunity simply means "a set of circumstances that makes it possible to do something."
55. The English word "opportunity" is derived from a Latin term, "ob portu." In the days before modern harbors, a ship had to wait for high tide before it could make it to port. *Ob portu* referred to a ship off port, waiting for when it might ride the return of the tide to harbor. The ship's crew knew if they missed it, they would have to wait for another tide.

56. Shakespeare turned this understanding into a memorable passage from Julius Caesar (Act 4, Scene 3):

   *There is a tide in the affairs of (people),
   Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;
   Omitted, all the voyage of their life
   Is bound in shallows and in miseries.
   On such a full sea are we now afloat;
   And we must take the current when it serves,
   Or lose our ventures.*

57. The Body of Christ always has opportunity before it. In the words of Shakespeare, we might say that the Church is always afloat on the full sea of opportunity. Responding to these opportunities as the hands, feet, and heart of Christ is a matter of incarnating (*that is, making real; giving form to*) the very fabric of Jesus' life and ministry into our own.

58. Ask yourself individually and together as a congregation what opportunities are before you to be Christ to another. Taking the "current when it serves" means being willing and ready to put your faith into action through all of the ups and downs that life brings.
59. Whether experiencing hardship yourself or ministering to others in times of sadness and difficulty, know that Godly joy, like St. Paul's description of love in his letter to the Corinthians, "always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres" (1Cor.13.7, NIV). Or, in the beautiful and poetic words of the psalmist, *Weeping may spend the night, but joy comes in the morning*" (Psalm 30.6, BCP).

60. Godly joy is thoroughly intertwined with the love of God and the love of neighbor. When one is attempting to succinctly state what makes God joyful, Jesus' summary of the law is a pretty good place to begin: *(First), Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. *(And second), Love your neighbor as yourself. *There is no commandment greater than these *(Mark 12.30-31).

61. The summary of the law recognizes our dependence on God and our mutual interdependence with one another. If we say that one of us doesn't matter, we might as well say that none of us matter. And that is antithetical to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

62. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. reinforced the truth of this mutual interdependence, which is necessary for the human family to more fully become the kind of family with which God would be well pleased. Here are a few examples of what he said on this point:

63. *We may have all come on different ships, but we're in the same boat now.*

64. *We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny.*
65. *Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.*

66. *Somewhere we must come to see that human progress never rolls in on the wheels of inevitability. It comes through the tireless efforts and persistent work of dedicated individuals.*

67. *The time is always right to do what is right.*

68. So let us do our part to strengthen this network of mutuality and the fabric of this garment of destiny, so that we are known as "*a people of Jesus' own who are zealous for good deeds*" (Titus 2.14, partial).

69. May we, like Bishop Elliott, believe in our heart of hearts, that conditions still make West Texas, to a remarkable degree, the Church's land of *ob portu*. That people here yearn for an expression of faith that is grace-filled and grounded in the very image of Jesus Christ. An expression of the faith that is outwardly focused, mercy-toting, and deeply committed to doing what we can do to meet the needs which cross our path.

70. Last year, 2015, we spent the year together under the diocesan theme, "Called to Serve." It is, of course, a theme that is appropriate every day, every year, because everyone can serve.

71. In January of last year, I received an email from Paul Frey, rector of Christ Church, Laredo. Cliff Hogan, one of his parishioners and delegate to last year's Diocesan Council, had sent him a quote from
Mother Teresa of Calcutta. Listen carefully, thoughtfully - and most importantly - prayerfully, to her words:

72. *The fruit of Silence is prayer...*

*The fruit of Prayer is faith...*

*The fruit of Faith is love...*

*The fruit of Love is service...*

*The fruit of Service is peace.*

And I will be so bold as to add one more line to her beautiful thought:

*And the fruit of Peace is Godly joy.*

73. So, go forth in hope and go forth in peace. Share in the Spirit; find consolation in love. Practice a ministry of humility and compassion. In all things, take your encouragement from Christ. Live a life worthy of the Gospel.

74. And as you live this life, be mindful that you only have so many days. Each day, therefore, begins as a gift. So treat it like you treat other gifts: unwrap it with joy. Godly joy. In so doing, may your joy be complete. Amen.