

Requiescat: the Right Reverend George N. Hunt

December 6, 1931 – 23 October 2022

Bishop George Hunt, a beloved member of St. Patrick's parish, has passed into the life everlasting on Sunday morning. Sundays are always a feast of the Resurrection, so there's a special sense of right and proper Anglican order that this is the day of his dying to this life and rising to the life everlasting.

Bishop Hunt belongs not only to St. Patrick's: he has a long and distinguished life of service to the entire Episcopal Church.

He was born in Louisville, Kentucky, a son to Jessie May Alter Hunt and George Nelson Hunt, and studied at the University of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee, earning his BA in 1953. A true son of the South, he earned his MDiv degree at Virginia Theological Seminary in Alexandria and was ordained in 1956. His theological studies were furthered at Yale University where he earned a Doctor of Divinity, and he later received an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters from the University of Rhode Island. George and Barbara Noel Plamp were married in June 1955.

Bishop Hunt's work began when he was appointed vicar of Holy Trinity Church in Gillette, Wyoming in 1956: in 1957 he additionally became priest in charge at St. John's Church in Upton, Wyoming, and then in 1959 took on as well the responsibilities of priest in charge at St. Francis Church, Reno Junction, Wyoming.

In 1960, the Hunts came to Oakland, California, where he was assistant rector at St. Paul's Church, in downtown Oakland for two years, until he was recalled to Wyoming as the rector of St. Alban's Church in Worland, Wyoming. He served there for three years, and then returned to California to be the rector at St. Anselm's Church in Lafayette, California. In 1970, he was called as rector of St. Paul's Church in Salinas, California, and was in Salinas until 1975 when he was called to be the executive officer for the Diocese of California. In 1980, he was elected, on the second ballot, as the Bishop of Rhode Island and served that work until he was asked to be the interim Bishop for the Diocese of Hawai'i, from which he retired in 1996.

While Bishop of Rhode Island, George Hunt fearlessly crusaded against the entrenched corruption within the state's government. He fought organized crime and gambling. He transformed the process for ordination in the Diocese of Rhode Island and ended discrimination against candidates for ordination based on issues of gender or sexual orientation. He paved the way for his successor as Bishop of Rhode Island to be Geralyn Wolf, one of the first women to be elected as Bishop in the Episcopal Church.

George Hunt was a visionary who could make vision become reality: He asked his diocesan membership, in his words, "Can we dare dream that our congregational/diocesan possessiveness of 'our things', our prerogatives, our buildings, our own individual ways of worship, will be put aside in favor of a wider accountability to the whole mission of Christ's Church?"

At the diocesan convention where he announced his retirement, he noted some of the responses to that vision: most congregations in Rhode Island had food pantries; meal sites were staffed and serving in nearly half of Rhode Island's parishes. Episcopal charities, clothing sharing, diaconal ministries of leading service to those in need had become common for RI folks to share in. In the action of that 1996 convention, the delegates continued to fulfill his vision, voting on resolutions to combat racism, establish a diocesan youth task force, and reaffirm opposition to casino gambling.

Bishop Hunt's resonant grace was shown in his address to that convention, when he said, of people he'd worked with in the Diocese, "I didn't always agree with you, but I've always respected you. I hope that's widely shared view, since uniformity has never been one of my goals. Rather, I've treasured this freedom to disagree as a sign of vigorous life in this part of the body of Christ."

How grateful we in the Diocese of Northern California, and especially at St. Patrick's, can be that Bishop George and Barbara Hunt chose to come to the Sonoma Valley for their retirement years. Bishop

Hunt didn't cease his ministry upon retirement: he has been interim, visiting celebrant, consultant, pastor, and spiritual guide to many folks in the Episcopal Church, and thanks be to God, most especially with us at St. Patrick's.

Truly, this faithful servant of Christ rests in peace to rise in glory!