For those who are new to the Anglican Province of America (APA), each Lenten Season, depending on the year, we have a project to assist a new or a struggling domestic mission with calling a priest. In other years we have the goal of assisting a foreign mission with a project such as building a school or a church building. This year’s goal is for a domestic mission and is to provide a way forward to encourage one of our well-trained young priests to take the challenge of building a mission church into a self-sustaining parish. So often there are small mission churches that have the desire but may not have the financial means to take on a priest. That is the purpose of this Lenten Appeal. It is not to make the rent payment on the building or pay the electric bill but to provide a living wage to a priest for a specified period of time. The goal is after that time, the priest would continue at the church and the congregation be able to fully support their priest.

Finding a suitable candidate may take some time and patience must be exercised by the mission committee (vestry) with advice and consent from the area Dean and the Bishop being a part of this process. Inviting other clergy from the Diocese (with the Bishop’s permission) to supply during the ongoing search will help encourage the people while the search process for just the right man continues. The priest and his family must be willing to live in the church community or close enough to adequately serve the parish and gain an understanding of the community and its needs.

This year’s Lenten Appeal is designated for St. James’ Anglican Church, Gloucester, Virginia. Our goal, as in previous years, is $100,000 for the support of a Vicar, who would relocate to the area. Generally, he would be compensated at $50,000 the first year, $30,000 the second year, and $20,000 the third year. The timing of the compensation could be negotiated with the Mission Church, the APA Treasurer, and the Bishop. Bishop David Haines visited St. James’ Church on a weekend at my request, to analyze the area demographics, the church facilities, and the 65 acres of land given to the church a number of years ago. He also talked with the Mission Committee and met a number of the parishioners. He celebrated and preached as well. He had a positive impression of the church and the possibilities of it being successful with the right priest.

Although we are in a challenging time, I am confident the Lord is with us and will guide us through this difficult time. We need to continue in our work for the Lord and his Church no matter what the issues we may face. We must keep going in our missionary effort especially with our Lenten Appeal. We have achieved our goals in the past and I am confident this year will be no exception.

God bless and keep us as we begin this Lenten Season faithful to our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Most Rev. Walter H. Grundorf, D.D.
Presiding Bishop, Anglican Province of America