



May 1, 2008

Dear Friends in Christ:

Grace and peace to you!

I want to bring you up-to-date on the progress of the Visioning Process.

As Lynn Zender shared with you in last week's Aurora, the Visioning Conference was a time of great blessing and encouragement. I have heard personally from many that it was one of the best moments of our life together as a Diocese. (Many have also asked that we find a way to have more gatherings of this nature, so as to continue to strengthen our life together. That we will do.) We all owe great thanks to the Conference Planning Team: Marcia Engblom, Delia Fay, Eric Duff, Linn Brownmiller, Connie Williams, Matt Nova, David Link, Robert Olsen and Lucretia Jevne. I am grateful also to all who have participated, not only in the Conference, but in all aspects of the Visioning Process to date. I am especially grateful to our facilitator, Helen Spector, for her leadership, and to all of the intercessors whose prayers have helped to keep us open to the Holy Spirit and listening with the ears of our hearts.

From the nearly 2000 individual Discovery reports that were sent in prior to the Conference, we identified about a dozen major ministry themes. At the Conference, the nearly 300 people present formed into groups that did significant sharing, reflection, and creative imagining around each theme. All this was done in the context of worship and prayer, with the emphasis on discerning God's call to us.

Now, that important work of discernment has been taken to the next step. Last week, your Diocesan Board and Council took all of the data given to us, and found in it these things:

There is real clarity and a sense of shared vision around **three essential core purposes**. Assuming throughout a foundational, constant commitment to the Baptismal Covenant, this Diocese is deeply committed to

1. **Common Prayer.** Worship in the Episcopal tradition. We encounter and experience God together through liturgy. The prayer is common but the language and styles are varied, contextual.

2. **Outreach.** Seeking and serving Christ in others. We are the hands, feet and heart of Jesus to a needy and broken world.
3. **Making Disciples.** Spiritual formation and education for all ages. Each person experiences on-going spiritual transformation and ministry development through prayer, worship, study, service, and development of gifts for ministry. We are all ministers in the service of God's mission; we are disciples of Jesus Christ called to make new disciples.

These things are on-going with us. They are not to be presumed upon; they need and deserve our continuing attention, intentionality, and nurture.

Beyond these core purposes, we have discerned that God is calling us at this time in our life as a Diocese to concentrate on **three shared mission priorities**:

1. **Community Connection through Collaboration and Communication**
2. **Evangelism and Congregational Development.**
3. **Youth and Young Adult Ministry.**

The Board and Council have formed working groups for each of the three priority areas. These groups will now begin to draft preliminary goals and objectives, and identify needed resources, with a view to the diocesan budget process, the emerging communications strategy and staffing plans, and the structure consultation all presently underway. Council has also chosen liaisons to each program group, to assist them in doing similar work. The results of all this work will be made available to everyone in the Diocese prior to Convention.

There is much that is obviously unfinished regarding these priorities, because it is very much a work in progress. At the risk of inviting some confusion, I am putting them before you now in this raw form, not only to keep you informed, but also to share with you my excitement that such wonderful progress has been made in discerning God's call to us. We have received a word from the Lord, a word we can trust.

Not that discernment ends here. Please continue to pray for this unfolding process, and for the many people engaged in this work, that God will continue to guide us, and that the end result will be both pleasing to God and worthy of God's people in the Diocese of Northern California..

Yours in Christ,

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