

Right Onward Visioning Commission Report to the 229th Annual Diocesan Convention

Our primary organizing question is simply: What would happen if our people could name the mission of their church with enthusiasm, clarity, and unity? The year began following the plan outlined at the Autumn Convocation Meetings 2011 describing a year of focus upon our missional identity as a Diocese and constituent congregations. The focus was further developed at Convention where vestry visitors were recruited to offer an initial conversation among every vestry of the diocese focused on three principle reflections:

How does your church provide an experience of God for those who come to you?

How is Christ working in and through your congregation?

Where is the Holy Spirit calling your church to change?

The request from congregations for such visitors was overwhelming and some 121 congregations engaged in the discussion. These brief reflections were preparatory to larger scale meeting planned for the Spring Convocations. Whole vestries were invited to attend the convocation meetings where a new pattern for gathering as a Diocese was envisioned and executed. A model for Convocational Vestry Meetings were experienced, structured by Word and Sacrament. The response to Scripture included both reflections from the Ordinary as well as small group reflections vestry by vestry, continuing a conversation around missional identity. The opportunities for discussion were guided by the Johnine story, The Woman at the Well:

Please relate a time in your life when you met Jesus.

Share a story of having given or received gracious, unconditional love. How has that changed you? How has that changed how you relate to others?

Use your imagination and tell how your congregation will be different if most members were able to share the story of their life in Christ Jesus? How would others encounter Christ in and through your congregation?

The Fall Convocations continued to expand on the theme of adding strength and muscle to our faith and the proclamation of the Good News of Jesus Christ. Again, surprising in strength of response, we ordered and reorder what became a total of 30,000 bands requested by congregations challenging the Episcopalians of the Diocese of New Jersey to claim: TGIF Today God is First.

The question of growing the vision and muscularity of our convictions is now placed in the context of transition: celebrating leadership and discernment of what comes next.

Faithfully submitted,

Philip Bohdan Carr-Jones, Chairperson
Anno Domini 2012