

Introducing One in the Spirit at Diocesan Convention

Right Reverend sir and madam, Canon McCarthy and delegates and guests of convention, it is my honor to introduce the work of One in the Spirit ... a new initiative of the Diocese of Los Angeles focused on deepening and broadening the mission of the Church as outlined in our catechism: "to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ."

In response to the Gospel call to be agents of reconciliation, we envision a recovery of our deep connection to each other and our world so we can participate more fully in the transforming work of love.

What we plan to build together over the next three years is our capacity as a diocese to expand relationships and deepen connections across differences in order to strengthen our shared commitment to follow Jesus.

Our aspirations include creating conversational communities to drive bridge building across the differences that simultaneously enrich and challenge us as a diverse, multi-cultural diocese utilizing existing diocesan programs and resources as well as creating new ones.

We have audacious goals: but the challenges of this present day call for nothing less if we are going to be the change we want to see. Those goals include:

To live more fully into our baptismal promise to respect the dignity of every human being.

To proclaim in Christ's name that we will not submit to our era's epic division and polarization.

To understand better how barriers of class, race, language, nationality, culture, politics, geography, orientation, and identification blind us to the burning image of the divine in one another.

To feed hearts that are hungry for connection and community in a secularizing, isolating age.

To choose not to choose between challenging systemic oppression in all its forms and respecting the dignity of every single human being.

As 21st century Anglicans we are the spiritual descendants of 16th century Anglicans who chose not to choose between being catholic and protestant in the 16th century ... a seemingly impossible thing when people were burning each other at the stake over theological differences.

Claiming that DNA of Anglican comprehensiveness, we are uniquely wired as a community of faith to offer an antidote of hope and joy to the destructive and pervasive narratives of anxiety and fear that fuel division and polarization in our church, our nation and our world.

We are convinced that claiming that core piece of our Anglican identity will equip us to do the work of bridging the differences that challenge us as 21st century disciples ... whether theological or political; cultural or generational or any other category that threatens to divide us.

Our initial task is to pull together a diverse team of leaders from around the diocese who will initially work on a process of collaborating and collating: doing an inventory of what programs, projects and initiatives are already in place doing this core Gospel work of reaching across difference and imagining together what we can create to both amplify the existing work and create new opportunities that don't yet exist.

We have begun by calling together this truly stellar team as our Steering Committee and we will be working together to field a wider task force in the weeks ahead. Won't you join me in thanking them for their leadership and willingness to serve in this important work.

I want to close with these words from our Presiding Bishop's opening remarks to Executive Council last month ... words that are germane not only to our One in the Spirit initiative but to our work in the world in this time of conflict, division and polarization.

The United States is being torn asunder within by the inability to be in deep relationship with each other and yet hold differing positions and convictions. And the test of this democratic experiment will be the capacity of this particular nation

to hold differences in the context of deep and real human relationships.

I really believe that Jesus was right. That the Way of Love, doesn't mean the way of agreement. But it means the capacity to love each other, and therefore, to seek the good together. Whether we agree or disagree. This is the democratic experiment; this is not just religious platitude. Dr. King once said, "History is replete with the bleached bones of civilizations that have refused to listen to ... love your enemies, bless those who curse you."

We must not become a valley of dry bones. And frankly, the only way is the way of love. There is no other way. And maybe, this wonderful little church of ours, can offer that -- This Way of Love -- to the body politic. Not for partisan ends ... but to change how we relate to each other as human beings.

And then ... said our Presiding Bishop ... we will see what happens.

Together we will see what happens here in the Diocese of Los Angeles as One in the Spirit draws us even more fully into our call to be beacons of God's love, justice and compassion in our beautiful and broken world. Thank you for the privilege of being a partner in this important work.