

April 22, 2009

A LETTER FROM THE VESTRY OF ST. PAUL'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

We, the Vestry of St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Marquette, Michigan strongly support our Bishop Elect, Kevin Thew Forrester, as he seeks approval through the current consent process by the Bishops and Standing Committees of the various Dioceses of the Episcopal Church in the United States. We are truly blessed to have Kevin in our midst and know that he will become an outstanding Bishop for our small but very committed diocesan family in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan.

As our Rector/Ministry Developer at St. Paul's for the past two years, Kevin has consistently enriched our relationships with Christ, our community, and each other through his exceptional pastoral and teaching gifts. We know him as a deeply spiritual and compassionate minister who walked with us through a particularly difficult time of grieving and loss after the sudden death of our beloved Bishop Jim Kelsey in 2007 and yet continued to instill in us the excitement, hope and promise of a richer, expanded life in service to Christ.

St. Paul's has flourished under Kevin's enthusiastic and patient tutelage. His extensive study and experience in developing mutual ministry which recognizes the unique gifts of each person, supporting lay ministries, and introducing new liturgies has greatly enriched and strengthened our congregational life. New programs have expanded our reach into our community. For example, Kevin has initiated a successful Healing Arts Center within our church, has incorporated Inter-Faith programs in our church schedule resulting in a broadened understanding of others, and has actively supported new pastoral care and welcoming programs, all of which have attracted new members to our church at a time when many churches are experiencing diminishing attendance. Our mission work at home and abroad has increased. Most recently, St. Paul's has become one of the host churches for a faith-based homeless program in our community, largely due to Kevin's encouragement and his commitment of service to others.

We cannot emphasize enough how this exceptional man has quietly and consistently expanded our spiritual lives as a Christian community. So it is especially painful for us to watch while others malign him during this consent process. He is one of us, and every unfair personal attack on our beloved Bishop Elect inflicts a deep wound on each of us, who we are, what we have worked to achieve, and how we wish to fulfill God's promise and love in our diocese.

We are grateful to those who have taken the time to get to know us, our strengths and limitations, our hopes, and our mission. We humbly pray that through the grace of God, the love of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the power of the Holy Spirit we shall see Kevin emerge from this approval process as the new Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Northern Michigan.

Faithfully,

The Vestry of St. Paul's Episcopal Church