

Conversations for Discerning Episcopal Ministry In the Diocese of Northern Michigan

- What:** Congregational conversations throughout the Diocese in every congregation
- When:** Between now to the end of February 2008
- How:** Missioners, Rectors, and Ministry Support Teams will facilitate these conversations, aided by video tape and table discussions. All congregations will have the same materials to work with.
- Then:** Results of congregational conversations will be gathered and submitted by the Episcopal Ministry Discernment Team. The deadline for congregations to get their feedback in is March 1, 2008

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Conversation questions to consider include:

1. Who are we (as a diocese) and what do we value?
2. Given who we are and what we value, what is your vision of Episcopal ministry?
3. How do we make that vision happen?

Time Line for Episcopal Ministry Discernment

- I. October 2007 - Table Discussions at Diocesan Convention
- II. December 2007 through February 2008 - Regional and Congregational Conversations
- III. October 2007 through February 2008 - Gathering of information (from I & II above)
- IV. February 2008 - Episcopal Ministry Discernment Team Forms
- V. April 2008 - Report Results of Diocesan-wide Conversations
- VI. February 2008 through January 2009 - Episcopal Ministry Discernment Team meets and does its work
- VII. Presentation of results from the Discernment Process to the Diocese
- VIII. January 10, 2009 - Affirmation of Discernment Results at a Special Diocesan Convention

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A collection of essays, articles, and papers which diocesan leaders are reading as part of their discussions are available to every congregation. Contact your MST, rector, or missioner for more information, or call 800-236-0087.

DISCERNING REPRESENTATIVES TO THE EPISCOPAL MINISTRY DISCERNMENT TEAM &
CONVERSATIONS FOR DISCERNING EPISCOPAL MINISTRY IN THE DIOCESE

In January and February the North Central Region engaged in a process of discernment with representatives from St. James the Less, Holy Innocents, St. John's and St. Paul's. The purpose of our discernment was to identify four representatives to the Episcopal Ministry Discernment Team (EMDT).

The EMDT will be composed of four members from each of the diocese's four regions, as well as representatives from the Standing Committee, Diocesan Council and Core Team. The EMDT will meet twice a month from March through October to discern our episcopal ministry, which includes the calling of a new bishop.

The North Central Region discerned the following people as our representatives on the EMDT (please contact with any questions, concerns, observations):

Mary Sullivan – St. Paul's, Marquette

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Sharon Stenglein – St. James the Less, Harvey

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Judy Britton – Holy Innocents, Little Lake

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Kathy Lenten – St. John's, Negaunee

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In addition, on January 27th and February 17th, St. Paul's hosted two opportunities for members of the congregation to gather for conversations concerning the future shape of episcopal ministry in the diocese.

I facilitated the conversations, which ran from about Noon-1:30 p.m. in the Great Room. We were aided by materials developed by the diocese, especially a DVD presentation.

Below are the results of the conversations, which have been forwarded to the Episcopal Ministry Discernment Team.

Congregational Conversations - St. Paul's – 27 January 2008

Question 1: Who are we as a diocese? What do we value?

- Self-reliant people
- Given our geography, we don't always know what other congregations are doing
- We have diverse modes of ministry
- Aging diocese
- Racially homogenous
- Not blessed with abundance of financial resources

Question 1: Who are we as a diocese? What do we value?

- Open and welcoming to all – much more than mere tolerance
- Think outside the box – we stretch the rules
- Accepting of others: worship, lifestyles
- Great value placed on our liturgy
- A family – love for one another; work together cohesively
- Pride in being pioneers of mutual ministry – exciting, value our uniqueness
- Diversity – visitor's weekend: others value it as well
- Committed to a youth presence in our congregations
- As a whole people we take responsibility for creation – we act
- Actively live out the gospel
- Making changes in the old paradigm
- Ecumenically-minded
- All races of people
- Our roots in the gospel and our wings to fly to new places
- Personal formation and education – e.g., covenant groups
- Ministry of all the baptized
- Sense of being chosen to do our work
- Threshold on a new place – e.g., all are invited
- Rebel Jesus

Questions 2 & 3:

Given who we are and what we value, what is your vision of Episcopal ministry?
How do we make this vision happen? What will it take to make that vision work?

- An Episcopal ministry that provides continued support for mutual ministry
- Too huge a job for any one human being
- Figure ways for others to take on tasks
 - Who would be on an Episcopal ministry support team?
 - How would this be done?
 - What “must” a bishop do? What might others do? Job sharing?
- Bishop as pastor and not someone consumed with nuts and bolts of running things
- How would we develop credibility around members of support team?
- Consider bishop not above others but as first among equals
- How could members of Episcopal ministry support team other than bishop participate in such things as affirmation weekends with credibility?
- Don’t want to run anyone ragged
- Might there be diocesan-wide or regional confirmations, commissionings, etc.?
- Episcopal ministry support team would help relieve burden of one person embodying both diocesan and national perspectives and responsibilities
- New team would need to continue to move diocese forward, not backward
- Embrace change
- Bishop would have to know us so well – know our vision, or we could be in real trouble
- Important to keep the process transparent – keep communication open
- During the present interim period administrative structures have emerged with leadership and this is working, with potential to free new bishop to be pastoral leader and not administrator
- We need to take the time we need in the discernment process
- We need to continue to process of constantly educating ourselves and to work on ways to include new people in the diocese so they know what is going on
- We need to make sure there is an effective decision making process with an Episcopal ministry support team
- Important to discern the gifts associated with the ministries the diocese need; discern members of team with these gifts
- If we remain conscious of the tension between decisiveness and consensus we will be able to work well
- Cooperation is important
- The Episcopal Ministry Discernment Team needs to keep in mind that when we bring people in to interview from the outside that we don’t know, they don’t always represent themselves as they truly are. How do we truly know someone who is being interviewed?
- Would it be possible that if we have candidates from the outside that they could spend considerable time with us first?
- The guidelines in our gifts discovery process advise us to consider only those folks we know well.
- What are other possible modes of Episcopal ministry the discernment team might consider?

Congregational Conversations - St. Paul’s – 17 February 2008

Question 1: Who are we as a diocese? What do we value?

- We are a loving community
- We are an open community
- We welcome and accept everyone
- We are enduring and have longevity
- We nurture our members
- We are based on tradition
- We nurture, accept and empower our youth
- We know one another

Question 1: Who are we as a diocese? What do we value?

- We value inclusion
- We value the gifts of everyone
- We value new ways of thinking about old ideas
- We value our faith tradition
- We value the emotional aspect of religion
- We value transformation
- We value service
- We value outreach
- We value communication
- We value liturgy and ritual
- We value music
- We value our heritage
- We value our physical structures
- We value friendliness
- We value our social connections and meaningful interactions
- We value our bonds of friendship
- We value our stability
- We value this geographical place

Questions 2 & 3:

Given who we are and what we value, what is your vision of Episcopal ministry?
How do we make this vision happen? What will it take to make that vision work?

- We envision collaboration
- We envision shared-leadership – it takes many people to do the work

- We envision outreach to bring people into the church
- We envision explaining and interpreting the faith in relationship to evolving life today
- We envision people moving in and out of leadership roles – mutual mentoring; teams
- We envision a viable alternative to fundamentalist forms of religion
- We envision the Episcopal leadership evolving and emerging
- We envision the leadership embodying mutual ministry
- We believe it is important to have clear expectations about leadership role(s)
- We envision leadership that is able to help us realize what we value
- We value a more pyramidal (but not tall and sharp, but flattened and elongated)
- We wonder how collaborative leadership can be effective
- We need the diocesan system to take time to focus and prioritize (including finances)
- We need Episcopal ministry that respects the mutual ministry process
- We need Episcopal ministry that recognizes and can work with the tension that exists in our diocese between different models of leadership
- We need clarity with leadership in Episcopal ministry, especially as relates to communication, expectations
- We need our congregations to continue on with their work and ministry and that will provide the basis for Episcopal ministry