

April 8, 2015

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

*By what power or by what name did you do this? Then Peter filled with the Holy Spirit said to them,... by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth... Acts 4:1-12*

When Standing Committee gathered in March, we were still in the journey of our Lenten Season, and excited by the beginning work of the Bishop's Nomination/Search and Electing/Transition Committees. Since then we continue to be empowered by the Holy Spirit as we moved towards the day we celebrated the Resurrection of our Lord and Savior and continue to move towards the manifestation of our own reconciliation of life in the Diocese as we diligently work to call our next Diocesan Bishop. Now as the "stone" has been rolled back, we welcome the spiritual effort of everyone, and pray for your continued encouragement and support.

In the March meeting, the Bishop's report offered some important updates on a variety of issues. This included the status of the churches struggling to maintain their buildings. On that front good news was reported as those churches found alternate resources to assist in the ongoing upkeep and transitions needed in their spaces. In addition, support is being offered to parishes in the City/County of Philadelphia as they comply with new tax assessment reporting requirements. The Bishop also shared the proposed content of two clergy days to be held in April and May, which will also address the new law regarding criminal background checks, and training for staff and volunteers who work with youth. Discussion was engaged concerning whether it would be helpful to offer a forum with Bishops serving other vital Dioceses, to introduce healthy and esteemed models of episcopal leadership and vision. The Standing Committee agreed that both clergy and lay could benefit and recommended that a Saturday in September would be a good time for this forum. This gives us time to schedule times with those recommended by Bishop Daniel.

Standing Committee continues to stay abreast of our financial commitments as we addressed the question of certain costs. Bishop Daniel along with Frank Allen agreed to explore all of our options in the best interests of the Diocese. We also approved the use of \$22,000 from the St. Andrews Fund for the work of the Philadelphia Theological Institute in 2015. In keeping with the canons of The Episcopal Church, we consented to the election of the Very Rev. Peter Eaton as the Bishop Coadjutor of the Diocese of Southeast Florida. At the request of the chair of the Christmas Fund, a motion to appoint Shirley Morris to be a member of its board of directors was approved. Standing Committee has also begun discussions of the 2016 budget, reviewed the forecasts and possible impact on the Assessment for the Episcopate.

As mentioned above we are graciously aware of the need to allow the presence of the Holy Spirit to move us forward. We recognize the value of the whole-hearted investment of everyone in this Diocese. To be included as part of our goal towards the fullest possible healing and reconciliation, within the Diocese, the Standing Committee

understands the importance of striving in unity. To that end we addressed concerns and engaged in the discussion of ways to clarify governance responsibilities of the various leadership groups in the Diocese. Perhaps the most critical decision out of this discussion was the agreement to move forward over the coming months with a revised “mapping of interdependencies.” Though we recognize that all of the concerns will not be accommodated immediately, we are committed to act on ways in which we can help bring clarity of purpose and authority to our roles. This we believe to be a crucial asset to the Diocese and to the Bishop, of whom the Holy Spirit within leads us to call.

Finally, in light of recent events concerning Bishops, we are aware of the importance of careful consideration by our Bishop Search/Nominating and Electing/Transition Committees around certain social issues. To address these issues, work with the Anti-Racism Commission is now being done to schedule a date and format for Anti-Racism training and both committees are being asked to participate in the Diocesan program for Safe Church Training.

As always, we remain grateful for the leadership and guidance of Bishop Daniel who has shown us such compassion and patience during this time with us. His confidence in our readiness for this journey has been both comforting and firm. We also thank the Diocese for entrusting us to this work. Continue to pray for us as we continue to pray for each of you.

Faithfully Yours in Christ,

The Rev. Deirdre Whitfield,  
Standing Committee