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THE LOST, THE LONELY.
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LETTER FROM THE BISHOP

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XVI BISHOP OF THE DIOCESE OF PENNSYLVANIA

In Luke 10, Jesus sent out the disciples in pairs to go ahead of him saying, “The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest. Go on your way. See, I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves. Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and greet no one on the road. Whatever house you enter, first say, “Peace to this house!” When they returned to our Lord, “they were filled with joy.”

Over the past three years, we have journeyed together on this sacred pilgrimage of faith, community and love. Together, we have been willing to engage in the hard work of preparing the field for our common life as a diocesan family. This ministry has involved toiling, turning over hard soil, bringing dark or forgotten places into the sunlight, pruning, watering, patience and love.

At each of my visitations, during numerous office hours in the diocese, in the staff’s daily work out in the diocese, and in listening to parishioner’s dreams and engaging in our sacred diocesan conversations—the seeds are emerging. Throughout it all, our focus has remained constant

- 1) addressing the poverty and pain of the world;
- 2) supporting and uplifting our churches; and
- 3) preaching Jesus Christ to the world.

I have heard from many that we have reached a new season in our common life together. That the first three years marked a fundamental change in our journey. Now, I invite each one of us in this beautiful diocese to step boldly into this new season. It is a time where we are called to trust, where we envision a new church, where we build together and deconstruct those things that separate us. This is hard work. Yet, as a diocese, we are willing to fail, accept that failure and, together, try again. Most importantly, we must love one another as Christ loves us.

The world is expecting a predictable church. The Church, our church, is the living body of Christ. It is hard to imagine Jesus looking into the eyes of those sitting at his feet and



saying, “We cannot dream of something new because we have always done things this way.” Thus, we must prepare the field for new growth, for the Church of 2025, 2050 and beyond.

Jesus offered us a sacred alternative vision based on God’s truth and reality. God is always transforming us and our world, and we must accept the invitation. We need to be fearless in our love of God and in our thinking. We must move from scarcity to abundance. We have Jesus—that is more than anything we can hope for and the answer to all our fears and prayers.

Our call is to serve the poor, the broken, the lost, the lonely. It is not about spending all of our time administering to the bricks and mortar of a building. We have churches where the entire budget is going toward maintaining the property. We have churches that need our common hands to assist with the path forward. If anything detracts from spreading the Good News of Christ, let us envision a new way of spreading the Gospel. “Whenever you enter a town and its people welcome you, eat what is set before you; cure the sick who are there, and say to them, “The kingdom of God has come near to you.” This is where true joy resides.

Sacred Journey

Yes, the world expects the predictable church. Let’s not be bound by structures. We are bound by our beautiful liturgy, our Book of Common Prayer and the Body and Blood of Christ. Let’s lead our church into the future by holding the faith of the early Church and disciples.

Let’s dream together and make that dream a reality. God is always planting seeds of hope. We are called to nurture those seeds and bring in a bountiful harvest. That mission will always challenge us. It will lead us beyond what we thought possible and shatter the limitations that we have placed on ourselves. I am grateful for each one of you and your faithfulness to Jesus Christ. I give thanks each day for the ability to serve as the shepherd and your Bishop.

May God bless you and may the seeds of hope awaken in our hearts.