



## Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts

138 Tremont Street Boston, Massachusetts 02111 • 617-482-5800 • [www.diomass.org](http://www.diomass.org)

March 11, 2016

Dear Friends in Christ,

As many of you know, our diocese is in the process of creating a new mission strategy. We on the listening team are very excited to see the number and diversity of people who were able to engage during January and February in the listening process that will inform the crafting of our diocese's plan for the future. We held seven open listening sessions around our diocese and also met with 12 focused groups. More than 750 people from more than 120 congregations participated in these open and focused sessions. We also received more than 325 responses to the online and phone surveys. Through this process, the members of our diocese expressed great enthusiasm for the work of serving God and our neighbors. You also named honestly the current characteristics of our church and culture that create barriers to our engaging most effectively in our ministries. The members of the listening team will report back to you soon in an initial report to let you know what the team has heard and learned over the past two months.

As the team prepares to issue that initial report in April to let you know what we have heard and learned so far, we offer the following information to help you and your congregation prepare to respond. Your continued participation is needed, so please consider attending a follow-up session or completing a survey.

### **When and how can I read the initial report?**

We will offer our initial report in the early part of April. We will post it online at [www.diomass.org/new-mission-strategy](http://www.diomass.org/new-mission-strategy) and send it to lay and clergy leaders throughout our diocese.

### **What information will be in the initial report?**

We are carefully analyzing the listening session transcripts and survey responses to identify key themes. We will report to you the concerns and hopes that were mentioned frequently and with passion in the listening process. We want to communicate clearly in a reasonable length, so we won't be able to mention every specific issue that has been raised. We hope this initial report will reveal places of convergence in views among members of our diocese.

### **How can I share my response to the initial report?**

We will gather your feedback through online and phone surveys from April 10 to April 24. The online link and toll-free phone number will be posted at [www.diomass.org/new-mission-strategy](http://www.diomass.org/new-mission-strategy) along with the initial report. We will also hold four sessions to briefly present the findings of the report and invite further conversation:

- **Sunday, April 10**, Trinity Church, 124 River Road, Topsfield, 2:30-4:00 p.m.
- **Saturday, April 16**, Trinity Church, 206 Clarendon Street (parish house entrance), Boston, 10:00-11:30 a.m.
- **Sunday, April 17**, St. Christopher's Church, 625 Main Street, Chatham, 3:00-4:30 p.m.
- **Saturday, April 23**, Church of Our Saviour, 120 Center Street, Middleborough, 1:00 - 2:30 p.m.

### **What kinds of feedback would be helpful?**

The goal of this listening process has been for members of our diocese to hear the many voices in our diocese and discover who we are together as diverse people knit together in one body in Christ. The listening team wants to know if we have overlooked any important perspectives. The team also wants to know how we can best serve our own time and place in Christ's name. You can help by sharing with the team any important information about our church or our world that you believe is missing from the report. Finally, it's important to learn together from the report. Please tell the team: What connections do you see? What new vision for our diocese can you imagine in response to the hopes and concerns that have been raised?

### **What will happen next?**

- We will incorporate your responses into a revised report, which we will share with you in May.
- The mission strategy drafting group, which is in the process of being named by Diocesan Council and Bishop Gates, will use the findings of the revised report and other information about the strengths and challenges for our diocese and our Episcopal Church to create a draft mission strategy, which the drafting group will offer for your input over the summer.
- Based on your feedback, the drafting group will make any necessary revisions and then present a proposed mission strategy in September for consideration by diocesan clergy and your delegates to Diocesan Convention in November. If approved, this plan will become our mission strategy for the next three years.

### **What can I do to help?**

Please encourage your communities to read the initial report, discuss its findings and share your responses in April, and to do likewise for the draft mission strategy when it becomes available.

Thank you for the passion and thoughtfulness you bring to this work. We are grateful for this opportunity to engage in honest conversation and build stronger relationships among the people of our diocese. It is exciting to witness the ways the Holy Spirit can use this process to call us to grow in faith and mission.

Glory to God, whose power working in us can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine!

### **Mission Strategy Listening Process Team**

The Rev. Meghan Sweeney, All Saints' Church, Attleboro (Chair)  
The Rev. Canon Libby Berman, Canon for Congregations (Staff Liaison)  
Mr. Billy Boyce, Grace Church, New Bedford  
The Rev. Karen Coleman, St. James's Church, Somerville  
Dr. Jim Daniell, All Saints Church, Brookline  
The Rev. Ennis Duffis, St. Anne's Church and St. John's Church, Lowell  
The Rev. Michael Hodges, Christ Church, Andover  
The Rev. Thea Keith Lucas, Episcopal Chaplain at MIT  
The Rev. Derrick Muwina, All Saints' Church, West Newbury  
Mr. John Woodard, St. Paul's Church, Dedham