

Bishop Candidate Forum – St. Paul’s, Duluth – January 13th, 2020

BETH ROYALTY: ...our second forum about that to this good people. I think I’ll deliver here, if that’s okay, for our second forum of the day. So these good people have already had a forum at St. Christopher’s in Roseville from 1 to 3 today, rode the bus. Here, we’re well-fed.

Members of your congregation downstairs, I wanted to thank Bill Van Oss and the whole congregation for your hospitality welcoming us all here. Thank you all for coming out tonight to be part of this.

We are live streaming tonight. This is our first experiment with that. And we welcome Kelsey and Emelia. Your ECMN missionaries are here doing that work -- so this and some of the other forums that we recorded. And then you can look at our ECMN web page later and watch yourselves or hear yourselves or watch these people and see what happened tonight.

I’m Beth Royalty. I’m the chair of the Bishop Transition Committee. I’m so glad to be here with you all as we get started.

You heard a little bit of instruction about the index cards. I would ask you all, if you’ve not already, to silence your cellphones. Please do that now so that we aren't distracted by various creative cellphone rings tonight.

Now, this is the reason you're all here. I want to welcome again our five wonderful candidates for the bishop of Minnesota. We have Abbott Bailey, Craig Loya, Robert Two Bulls, Erika von Haaren and Kara Wagner Sherer down there. So let’s give them a round of applause now.

[Applause]

And then I want to ask you not to applaud anymore to the theory and of course, clap together. We will give a break halfway through. You can write your questions when our folks here take a quick break. And then I'm going to turn this over to Joy Caires who’s our chaplain. She will pray us in and then we will get started.

JOY CAIRES: Tonight, we'll be using the prayer that was written for the bishop search by the Bishop Search Committee with a slight modification. I know many of you have been praying it to these past few months and so I thought it suitable to bring it tonight.

The Lord be with you.

ALL: And also with you.

God of light and life, you have faithfully guided the people of the Episcopal Church in Minnesota since the very beginning.

You have raised up hard-working and entrepreneurial leaders, blessed us with racial and cultural diversity, deepened our faith, given us the courage to stand with neighbors who are struggling,

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and increased our awareness of your presence and activity.

Help us to trust your Holy Spirit as we open our minds and hearts to discern the leader who can help us participate in your preferred and promised future.

As we gather this night with the candidates for the 10th bishop of the Episcopal Church in Minnesota, help us to support each other in love and fellowship and with a deep appreciation of the gifts each of them brings to bear.

All this we pray in the Name of Jesus, the One who came and share our place and free us from everything that keeps us from your love so that we can live for others, Amen.

ALL: Amen.

DENISE GRABER: Good evening. My name is Denise Graber. I am part of the transition committee and I'm going to be the facilitator of this evening. I also am the director of Circle of the Beloved in North Minneapolis which is the Minnesota branch of the Episcopal Service Corps. So I'm thrilled that you guys are here this evening.

Our candidates, what we're going to do is we're going to have a series of questions and we're just going to start here on this end. Kara will answer first and then Erika will go next and then we'll just kind of go down the line. Everybody will kind of take turns, having the questions first.

So with that, are we ready? -- Ladies and gentlemen, let's get going.

So turn the page, please. Here we go. Okay, so we are going to start with some general questions that--

FEMALE: Introduce.

DENISE: Oh yeah. [Laughter] This is only the second time and I'm already lost. Holy cow. -- Thank you. I'm sorry. I need to quit talking.

[To the candidates] You guys will get to start out by saying a little bit about yourselves.

KARA WAGNER SHERER: Good evening. My name is Kara Wagner Sherer. I'm so glad to be here. The last time I was here in April, I saw a woman swimming in a bikini in a lake so I know you're all tough. [Laughter] I hope I don't see that this time with... you know.

I'm here really because the Episcopal Church in Minnesota taught me how to be a Christian. I remember the first sermon I ever preached was the Sunday after Easter in my home church of St. James Marshall, Minnesota. They let the youth group run the service, the Sunday after Easter.

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I remember my sermon because I talked about how I really wished God was like a neon sign that was clear and direct and let us know what we should do and where we should go. Of course, even then I knew that discernment is not that simple.

It turns out discernment for me, recently, came in the form of a text message from my daughter, who’s a member of St. John's and St. Paul, saying the bishop of Minnesota is retiring. And I thought, “Oh.” I'm curious. I didn't know that he was retiring. I haven't been paying attention to the usual newsfeed because I wasn't really looking for a job change. So I began to think about it and to wonder.

I wondered at first, “Did I want to go back to Minnesota because I miss real winter?” In Chicago, we don't have real winter. They think we do but we don't. And of course I have a lot of family in Minnesota. But I was also concerned if maybe my desire to come back here had to do with nostalgia.

And I know that God never calls us backwards. So I was really curious to see who you all were since I had left 26 years ago. And I was pleasantly surprised to see how Minnesota has changed and how you, as the Episcopal Church in Minnesota, have embraced change as an opportunity.

I have seen how you are the hands and feet and stomach of feeding people and heart of Christ for your neighbors, for each other and for all of Minnesota, and I’m excited by that. I have a passion for learning and growing and I'm curious about doing that with you.

I don't have a plan as your bishop but I'm really curious about what the plan going forward with a new vision will be.

The Episcopal Church in Minnesota made me a Christian and formed me in the way of love and I have continued to benefit from that pattern of life of daily conversion and I would like to see how we continue to do that for each other.

ERIKA VON HAAREN: Hey, Minnesota. I'm Erika von Haaren. It's a pleasure to be with you tonight... to be back with you. I grew up in Minnesota as well. Until I was 26, I was here and being formed by the Episcopal Church in Minnesota before I went off to seminary and became a priest and then moved to Arizona, of all places. But the southeast river valley is my home, where my family still resides.

I graduated from the University of Minnesota for my undergrad degree before I went. I was one of the founders of the young adult movement in the '90s iteration of that in the church and I spent lots of time all across the state being formed by all of you.

So when this opportunity came forth for me through the petition process, I was quite surprised by the shove of the Holy Spirit that I received but tried to listen.

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My life has been about forming connection because that's what I got formed in -- the formation that you get by long years with people that really know what it is to love and serve Jesus in the world.

My life in Arizona has been a distinct pleasure and not one I could have imagined. I work at St. Barnabas Episcopal Church and we're a 1600-member parish. I grew up at Christ Church Frontenac which has about 20 people on a Sunday so it was a little bit of a change for me.

But there, I've gotten to learn some pretty amazing skills -- leading our staff of 15 and managing our \$2.4 million budget. All of that kind of added up to being an opportunity to be a partner with lay leaders and people all over the Diocese of Arizona. And those skills added up again to possibility -- possibility of what could be next for me and where I could put all those things that I had gathered over my life to use, and so maybe it's here.

But the joy of being with all of you in this place and seeing all that you've become and are becoming is a delight. I'm in joyful discernment with you.

ROBERT TWO BULLS: Good evening, everyone. My name is Robert Two Bulls and I'm the missionary for the Department of Indian Work and Multicultural Ministries as well as the speaker of All Saints Indian Mission in South Minneapolis.

I've been in this position now for 14 years, serving in these positions of various capacities, various levels, depending on what's going on, what's happening.

I grew up in western South Dakota. I'm a fourth generation Episcopalian. My dad is a priest. I grew up in a church. My mother was a really strong layperson who did a lot of work. Last time I was home visiting my dad, he was looking at photos. I noticed that at least 90% of those photos were all connected with the church. So this got me really thinking how deep it is in my DNA the Episcopal Church is.

So I was called to priesthood. I've been ordained. Now I'm celebrating my 20th year as a priest. And when I look back, I look back on what the church has given me and it has opened many doors. I've ended up in the most interesting places here in the States. I've met a lot of people both here and abroad and it's all because of the church. I would have never thought in my wildest thoughts that I'd end up here in Minnesota but here I am.

I grew up in a household where my older brother was just a hardcore Oregon Viking fan. [Laughter] You know, that part of the country, you're either a Bronco fan or a Viking fan. I kind of like the Viking but secretly, I was a Packer fan. [Laughter] I know Director Bill is one of the few here in Minnesota that I know is a Packer fan. So going down the road, it will be a good game.

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Now, being here in Minnesota, what I’ve come to understand about myself is that I've come to love Minnesota. I've come to love the Episcopal Church in Minnesota. I've come to love a lot of the people that I've met so far here in Minnesota. I love the Episcopal Church.

I look forward to, if I'm called to be your bishop, to continue down this road together and see where it takes us. Thank you.

CRAIG LOYA: Good evening, everyone. My name is Craig Loya and I currently serve as the dean of Trinity Cathedral in Omaha, Nebraska. It's a real joy to be here with all of you.

My wife, Melissa, and I, are looking forward to learning more about everything that God is doing here in Minnesota. It's a privilege to be in discernment with all of you and with four really extraordinary colleagues.

One of the things that I love to do on a day off is to hike in the Loess Hills of western Iowa. The Loess Hills are a really unique and beautiful prairie landscape. There's a staggering diversity of different plant and animal species and some of those you won't find anywhere else in the world but in the Loess Hills.

And like any ecosystem, its diversity is essential to its health. Even though the trees come in all different shapes and sizes and even though the flowers express themselves in different ways and at different times and the animals have different habits and ways of forming community, they all depend upon one another in order to thrive. And they're all nourished from the same soil.

When I was first approached by a number of people in Minnesota about being part of this discernment process and started to learn more about ECMN, the first thing that I thought about was those Loess Hills.

One of the things that is most exciting to me about this moment in the life of ECMN is the way the Holy Spirit is inviting you to continue cultivating an intentionally-diverse church ecology where people from almost every imaginable background, with very different expressions of church and models of coming together often spread across vastly different contexts, are learning together how to connect more deeply with one another, how to receive one another as a pure gift, and most importantly, how to root yourselves more deeply in the person of Jesus.

In different ways, I have been working to cultivate intentionally-diverse church ecologies for most of my ministry -- working to create space for grassroots innovation to emerge right alongside really traditional forms of being the church, bringing together people from different backgrounds around a common vision and trying to make space in the center for those whose voices have often been on the margins.

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In this moment, our world needs more than ever to know the power of God's love to heal and I can't think of anything that I would rather give my life to than witnessing to the power of that love in the world.

ABBOTT BAILEY: Good evening. I am Abbott Bailey and I am currently the Canon to the Ordinary in the Diocese of California.

I have been thinking over the last week or so, as we just celebrated the feast of the epiphany, about the journey -- the journey of the Magi who took off heading on a long and arduous journey to a place they weren't really sure where they were going. But they went to follow “His star” -- it says, “His star” -- to bring the gifts that only they could bring to the Christ child.

It reminded me once again that our God is a sending God -- from Abraham and Sarah, “Go to the place that I will show you” -- to the prophets and throughout the Christmas and epiphany story, the shepherds, the Holy Family and later, the apostles and the Magi.

God is a sending God -- sending people often to places they aren't sure what the road is going to look like to bring the gifts that only they can bring.

Well, right now, the Episcopal Church is being sent deeper into God's mission, being sent to disentangle itself from all of the cultural forces that conspire against the gospel of Jesus, to point to the life-giving presence of Jesus.

I have been so inspired and compelled by the many ways that I have seen ECMN being caught up in this “sending God,” entering with courage and taking risks.

I have been tracking you all for a number of years. Somebody said I might have been stalking you. [Laughter] But I’m so compelled that I found myself swept up. My dog, Alice, is wondering what might be going on in this sweeping up into this sending here to be part of the bishop search in Minnesota.

There are a lot of things on this road that we don't know but there’s a lot that we do know. One of the things that we know, that in a world that is so quick to tell people who's in and who's out, who belongs, who doesn't belong, who matters and who doesn't matter, our sending God is sending us deeper and deeper into a community, into a longing, into communion, into love for one another that we might point to the experience and presence of that loving presence.

So I am excited to be swept up in this with you as you discern the next bishop of Minnesota.

DENISE: Thank you, candidates. We appreciate that. So now we will start with the questions, just [inaudible - 20:07]. -- So Erika, we will begin with you.

Our first question we would like to visit about is, “What do you feel the role of the bishop is” and then “Which parts of that role do you live into” and “In which part of that role would you

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reimagine?”

ERIKA: I believe the role of a bishop, for lack of a better term, is, in essence, to be something of a symbol. And the symbol is representative of all of you. Thus, the bishop can't be a lone ranger, going out and doing what they think. They have to represent the passions and the interests and the life of the place where they are serving and the people among whom they serve. That energy wants to then unify us toward the common purpose that we're called to.

Doing kingdom work is a communal effort. And so the bishop wants to be something that brings everyone together. And together, we can point to that symbol and know what it means to all of us as a whole.

The parts that I would keep -- I hold right here in the examination that is in the ordination of a bishop -- are everything that I believe and understand about what a bishop must be and do -- to guard the unity, faith and discipline of the church and to lead with joy.”

The parts that we reimagine are very much what we reimagine. It's not about what “a” bishop should be. It's about what “the” bishop of Minnesota must be to faithfully represent all of you and who Christ is within all of the communities of Minnesota. So I look forward to doing that work together with you.

ROBERT: When I think of all the bishops I've known in the past -- I've grown up in a church where I did -- there's a number on that I can look to and think about as good examples of what a bishop is, at least from my point of view and what I think one is. For me, first and foremost, a good shepherd looking out for their flock, looking after their people. And what does that mean?

One bishop of many years ago... He passed away. His name is Steven Plummer. He was the bishop of Navajo. And he was a real shepherd. He actually had sheep that he tended to. [Laughter] It was in the House of Bishops. It's probably a rare thing. When he died, his sheep wouldn't come out of the hills. People called them. They knew each one by name. So they called out for the names of each sheep but they wouldn't come down so finally, they had to come down and get them -- whatever. But he knew his sheep. He knew his people. The people said after he died, they felt lost. So a good shepherd, that's one image.

Now, if I have to think about what would I live and to try to change and make different... You know, one of my least favorite things as being an administrator... I could admit that because it's something I would rather not have to do. I'd rather just do the work and then have a team around me that would do the other stuff. But I think the way things are set up now and the way it's going, you know, we have--

And I'm privileged to work with a great team of missionaries who do all the administrative stuff -- all the stuff that you don't see, the behind-the-scenes stuff -- and to be able to work into that and keep working with that team and see how they do their work, how deeper they go into it,

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what would they change, what would they add, etcetera. I think that's what I would live and do -- how to be a better administrator with the people around.

CRAIG: Yeah, a bishop, obviously, has a lot of different roles. But in my experience, in order for a bishop to be most faithful and most effective, everything they are and everything they do really needs to be grounded in a bishop's role as chief pastor.

As you all know, a pastor is someone who is present, who listens, who knows, who challenges, who inspires and who loves the people who are committed to their care. That's a part of the bishop's role that I would very much want and need to live and do.

The most important work in the church happens in local faith communities like this one. That's where people meet Jesus. That's where people's lives are transformed.

So as a bishop, it would be really important to me to spend as much time in local faith communities as I possibly could and to keep as many resources in local faith communities as possible because that's where Jesus is known in the world.

Where I would want to reimagine the role of a bishop a little bit is around the kind of traditional expectation that the bishop is the one who has all the answers or the bishop is the one who kind of comes up with the perfect plan or the bishop is the chief problem solver in a particular place.

Rather than those things, because the spirit is always working at the grassroots level in local faith communities, I think the role of a bishop is to, in the first place, help to cultivate what the spirit is doing in those local faith communities. And then the bishop's role is to help curate the stories of how people's lives are being changed in those communities and to share those stories more broadly.

And then finally -- I said this to the search committee a number of times -- the bishop's role is to be a pollinator who's taking the seeds of new life that are emerging in one place and helping to plant those that might inspire new life in another place. -- So, “cultivator, curator, pollinator, pastor.”

ABBOTT: I said a few moments ago that our God is a sending God and this implies that God is out in front of us, that Jesus is always out in front of us. So I see one of the roles of the bishop is helping to continue to cultivate and nurture the focus of our eyes on Jesus, to keep us focused on where Jesus is, that we may continually be following this one who is life-giving for all of us.

I also see the role of the bishop as one that is cultivating. The Episcopal Church in Minnesota is this incredible web of faith communities and institutions and mission organizations and the role of the bishop is to cultivate and to tend that beautiful, loving, love-soaked web of connections and to be engaged in a ministry of deep presence.

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And I am looking forward to more conversations about geography and ministry of deep presence and what that means because that always means, even with all of the technology we have, a significant degree of proximity. -- So a ministry of deep presence and pastoral care.

And I would say in terms of reimagining, one person or one role cannot change a system or a community. A community changes a community.

So I would look forward to being in conversation with you all, if I were elected bishop, as to how the role of the bishop would be reimagined, how this community might have a conversation about that reimagining.

KARA: I see the role of a bishop to have the 10000-ft. view of the whole Episcopal Church in Minnesota -- or in this case, the 10,000-lake view -- to see that broad vision. And the way that that is created is by digging deep into relationships and creating a network between faith communities, between leaders, between all the people, a network that becomes a net -- the kind of net that Jesus called us to use to fish for people. And the bishop is the tender of that net.

I think a good bishop loves, trusts and tells the truth to their clergy and leaders and expects that all the clergy and lay leaders love, trust and tell the truth to their people. So it's a relationship of accountability.

The thing that I would not change and that I would love the most are the visits -- being with people, seeing your context, seeing who you're serving, who your neighbors are and what gifts you bring to your ministry.

As far as re-envisioning, that is something I expect you to teach me. I learned to be a rector from my current parish and I expect that a bishop needs to learn from the people what kind of a bishop is needed.

I know two things I wouldn't want to forget. As a rector, I never wanted to forget what it was like to be a newcomer in a church. I think as a bishop, I never want us to forget what it's like to be a leader in the church, a layperson in the church.

My current bishop in Chicago reminds us all that there is no reason for a bishop or missionaries to exist unless they are there as resources and servants of all the people.

DENISE: Thank you, guys. I appreciate that. And then our next question, we will begin with Robert. So would you all please describe the time when you have facilitated a listening process to reach a decision within your faith community. How did you go about that listening process and also how did you make sure that all different parties were heard?

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ROBERT: Well the most recent one occurred a few months ago at our ministry of All Saints Indian Mission of First Nations' Kitchen. We recently did hire for a part-time director to run the program -- that was back in April-June -- and went through the six-month job performance. We talked to her about it and she needed to do some improvements in order to move forward.

After a few months, we didn't see too much of significant changes in certain areas of the job so what we did is we gathered together a committee. We met. We talked. We made sure everybody was heard around the table. And then we heard from the director. So we made sure that all voices were heard and that everybody can share something.

Now, one of the things that goes on in any circumstances, there's usually some voices that is calling for something that's a little more drastic, say, like letting somebody go, for instance, or somebody who's a little less inclined to do anything -- free of conflict. But we need to get all the voices out. That's my approach, is I make sure everyone's heard before any decision is made. We'd pray about it. We'd center about it before we do any action.

Now in this case, in the end, the director, she eventually decided that she wanted to depart from the position when she did and things in the end worked out.

DENISE: Excuse me, Craig, before you get started, would you just remember we are live streaming this and so we need to make sure that we can correctly hear everybody. So just either speak a little louder or have the microphone up and speak.

CRAIG: Okay.

DENISE: Thanks so much.

CRAIG: So a couple of years ago, at the cathedral where I serve, the leadership really all came to the realization that one of the buildings on our campus was badly in need of renovation and we couldn't really defer it anymore. But instead of just jumping in and starting to decide what color we wanted to paint the walls and what kind of furniture we want to replace the old stuff with, we decided to take a step back. We knew we had this big challenge in this building and we wanted to spend some time listening to what the Holy Spirit might be saying to us in that challenge.

So what we did is we engaged in a broad listening process where we really intentionally met and listened to every group within the cathedral congregation. We listened to many of our neighbors. We went around the neighborhood and heard from a lot of the people who were in our immediate neighborhood about their hopes and their own needs and their challenges.

One of the ways that we made sure that everybody's voice was being heard is the leadership team was pretty rigorous about every time we met to review how things were going, asking the question, "Whose voice haven't we heard" or "Which voice is not yet around the table trying to

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discern this with us?”

What we came up with was a really exciting and remarkable vision for a community spiritual center which if I had more than a minute left I could go on at great length. But what I want to say about that listening process is, to me, the most remarkable thing was that both the vision itself and the confidence to pursue it came from the way the community listened deeply to one another.

The most exciting thing to me in it was how the whole community came together. It wasn't the leadership team going into a room and then coming out with a plan but the vision emerged by people learning how to listen to our neighbors and how to listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit together.

ABBOTT: Early on, in my tenure as a rector, one of our beloved parishioners was arrested for aggravated sexual battery involving a child. This was obviously a matter of grave concern to the congregation. It was public information.

In order to address it, we needed to have some significant deep conversation on the vestry -- many, many pastoral conversations. And then also, we had a congregation-wide community listening session. It was hard and it was painful but we did it and it set it up for the next conversation that we had in this wildly and wonderfully politically and socioeconomically and theologically-diverse congregation.

We had a conversation around the... We were given the option of generous pastoral response to offer the same-gender blessings before marriage equality.

But we had this in our DNA at this point. We had a conversation and we're one of the first congregations in Virginia to be granted permission to do this.

What these did was then set us up for... In 2016, after the election -- again, in this very politically and theologically-diverse congregation -- one of the things that we could say is that we know how to do this. We are a community that knows how to stay in conversation, that we know how to be generous and loving with one another and generous when we bump up against the rough edges of our diversity and difference. We know how to do this as a community because we have listened deeply to one another and stayed in community.

KARA: One of my roles in the Diocese of Chicago is to serve as a consultant, so I will be sent to do vestry retreats. One time, a couple summers ago, I was asked to go to a congregation that was having a big fight. The rector and wardens had decided to put up a rainbow flag -- not just a sticker on the door but a huge flagpole at the top of the hill at the church. And this was a church that had written a very angry letter to the bishop after Gene Robinson's ordination. So everyone was a little on edge about what was going on in this congregation.

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So I had the opportunity to talk to the wardens and members of the vestry and the priest and just hear their history and where they were in this conflict. And then I was present for a community meeting. So it was my job to make sure that the space was a courageous space where people could speak and where people could be heard and where all voices could be heard and no voice would overcome other voices, and most importantly, a place for silence. The Holy Spirit is very powerful but silence helps a lot for us to listen.

We discovered, in doing a timeline of the conflict, that really, one of the big issues was around communication. It was my job to then report back, and they've made a decision about keeping the flag. But this important conversation was just [\[here - 39:55\]](#) because it was clear that the congregation loved each other. And they were deeply hurt but they were hurting each other in this conflict.

It reminds me of the story of Jesus and the Gospel of John, when the woman is taken in adultery and Jesus bends down and writes in the dust. He pauses and gives time for the Holy Spirit to work in the hearts of those. And then that famous line, “You who without sin should cast the first stone” and dissipates the conflict. That is the power of listening.

ERIKA: Several years ago at St. Saint Barnabas on the Desert, we engaged a sincere listening process around what was next for us as a parish. I worked as the COO -- the chief operating office, if you will. Our senior pastor or rector had been there for about eight or 10 years. And about that time is often when new rectors come, and we're delighted our rector wasn't going any place. But we'd achieved some goals and we kind of gotten down the path of some visions and it was time to ask, “What's next?”

So we designed what we called the “Season of Discernment” and collectively offered this open-ended listening process to the whole parish. We invited people to come to forums at various times of day. We met with small groups all over the campus -- the Friday Morning Men’s Group and the Tuesday Morning Ladies and the choir and others -- trying to make sure that we'd heard as many voices as possible to help us understand, “Where are we supposed to go next? What is new for us? Where is God calling us? What could we become in this next season?”

No answer was off the table. We threw everything up onto whiteboards and big pieces of paper. Every idea was captured.

And then together, the leadership met and we all looked out at this kind of big wall with all the answers there that we received from people and we started to put together the themes and the various things that we were hearing that kind of echoed each other in these answers. And that together is what set the course for our next season at St. Barnabas. We heard a call towards deeper communication. We heard a call to increase our presence with children and youth. We heard a call to maybe develop a Saturday night service.

So we tried all those things and have grown and deepened all of our relationships through that. And when those things began, we got the opportunity to hear all of our people look up and say,

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“Yes. Yes, that's what we said and that's where we're going,” and it's been a joy.

DENISE: Thank you. -- Okay, Craig, this next question, we'll begin with you. As you guys know, Minnesota is a state with very rapidly changing demographics. So could you discuss how later, if you have, and how you do it, raise up a vision around a common goal with people of so many different circumstances?

CRAIG: Not long after I got to Trinity Cathedral, I was working with a member of our congregation who was discerning a call. Specifically, she was really filling calls to start a ministry with survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence. So as we talked about this, what we decided to do was, “Let's first ask what is God already doing out ahead of us in the community?”

So we spent a period of time listening to almost everyone that we could find in Omaha who was, in one way or another, working with survivors. What surprised us is over and over and over, we heard that what Omaha needed was a residential and economic empowerment program for survivors of sex trafficking. There wasn't anything like that in our region.

So we partnered with Becca Stevens and the Thistle Farms in Nashville, Tennessee and we started an affiliate program in Omaha. But in order to do that, a really broad coalition of people had to come together. In addition to people in our congregation, we partnered with a number of secular organizations in the community. We partnered with a number of clinical providers in the community. We got support from churches in very different contexts all over the diocese of Nebraska and beyond.

So by the time that we launched it, a whole diverse group of people that were racially, economically, geographically, theologically and politically-diverse had all formed a community together for the purpose of joining Jesus in challenging one of the ways that our culture tolerates violence against a member.

I have to say, in all of my years of ordained ministry, that has been one of the most profound and powerful experiences of what is possible when a group of people comes together and lets the spirit lead.

ABBOTT: My first week on the job in California, I was put on a team to start looking at pay equity among clergy in the diocese. Through some twists and turns, I ended up getting to enjoy the task of actually running all of that data myself. That also meant that I got to expand the scope of it -- so realizing that it was important to expand the scope, not just to be looking at pay equity among female clergy and male clergy but also looking at LGBTQ clergy and also our clergy of color.

The data was sobering, for sure, and has already led to some changes that are happening in the diocese.

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Not long after that, I had an opportunity to have a conversation with a young man making his way into the Episcopal Church. He had spent some time in monastic community -- it was Afro-Caribbean -- and was falling in love with the beautiful traditions of the Episcopal Church and at the same time feeling unsettled. He couldn't quite figure out why until he did.

He said, “You know, I figured out that the Episcopal Church is an ethnic church and once I figured that out, that helped me.” So we had this conversation about all of the wonder and beauty and richness of this incredible tradition and also all of the ways that our history as an ethnic church permeates everything that we do -- the way that we worship, how we form people, our values.

And as we are called to expand our vision of who we are as an Episcopal Church, the conversation is now about, “How do we do that” and “How do we consider who we are in more expansive ways?”

KARA: 15 years ago, when I first started at St. John's, one of our neighbors froze to death on the tracks because he didn't have a home. This so bothered one of her neighbors that she began to gather community partners from the food pantry at the Methodist Church down the street and then our medical clergy group got on board. We decided that we needed to work together to do something for those people who were homeless in our area.

This involved a really unique partnership between small business owners, church groups and then neighbors. And because of that wonderful NIMBY, “Not In My Backyard,” thing that happens when people get good ideas about helping others, we had some one-on-ones with our local politicians -- alderman is like a mini mayor in Chicago -- and we were able to form a not-for-profit called “Hands to Help Ministries.”

St. John's actually got to be the local drop-in site. We hired an outreach worker. We started being able to pay someone four hours a week to be two hours at the drop-in and two hours on the street reaching out to people.

I'm happy to say that after eight years, I didn't have to be president anymore. I could pass that on to someone else.

It became an integral part of the neighborhood. So now, on Facebook, if somebody says, “What do I do? I just saw somebody sleeping outside,” people say, “Call Hands to Help.”

It's a wonderful example for our congregation that though it is a not-to-profit and nonsectarian organization, we at St. John's know that we're doing this because of our baptismal covenant and that we see Christ in our neighbor and this is the way that we express that love.

ERIKA: I have the privilege in the Diocese of Arizona to serve as the chair of the Commission on Ministry. That's the body that helps people discern their future ministries. For a long time, we

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were a bit overly focused on discerning only the lives of those looking towards holy orders -- clergy-hood.

So about two years ago, we started this process of discernment in which we said, “We need to be for more than just clergy. We need to open ourselves and really look to helping laypeople discern what their calls are to leadership in the church as laypeople.

It's been a delight because we're right in the middle of the process now which is a little bit of a commentary. Sometimes, “How long these processes can take,” right? We can get a vision and really want to go for it but it is about the slow and steady work to making it happen.

So we've developed already so far in our process knowing that we needed to overturn sort of how to get our diocesan-wide discernment process. So we developed a new day of ministry discernment. That's not just for people discerning clergy-hood but also for people who are discerning lay ministry. They all come to an initial day to learn about what it means to discern and how is God working in all of our lives.

In a couple of weeks, I'll be with the clergy of Arizona and our clergy conference where we'll do some listening sessions with the clergy to hear what is it that you could do in your parishes and what are you hoping for to have support so you can raise up the [lay - 51:55] in your parishes to be strong lay leaders and to have what they need.

And the long distance for us is something that you guys already have in place in a beautiful way which is your lay ministry formation opportunities here and so it's an exciting time and an opportunity for us to go deeper into raising up this vision collectively together.

ROBERT: For the last 11 years, we've been operating a leading ministry called “First Nations’ Kitchen” in South Minneapolis. If we look back at the years, what I've noticed is the diverse groups that have come through -- a volunteer on a Sunday afternoon whether it's food prep, serving or cooking.

What we do is we serve organic indigenous food, so we don't serve any chicken, pork or beef. It's all indigenous -- a lot of buffalo that's raised here in Minnesota, get the wild rice from Leech Lake and Wilder.

So with that, we have various groups that come through whether it's among congregation, faith community, Latino, Spanish-speaking faith communities.

More recently, we had Troop 100 which is among scout troop. One of the young men was working on his Eagle Scout so he came in to manage his crew throughout the whole afternoon.

So that's one thing we do. You know, try to do this work multi-culturally across the economic spectrum. We have all these different faith communities from... Many of the metro area come

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through. The Lutheran Church has come through sometimes, Catholic Worker, the Native American Law Students Association. Every year, the foreign student exchange comes through. So these young people are from all over the world.

So when I look back on that experience, I’m just seeing like the diversity there has come through All Saints -- one of our faith communities here in Episcopal Church in Minnesota.

So there is a lot of work ahead of us to do. There's a lot that we can't do.

And I think for me, just look at Matthew 25, read through that, and you'll get at least a scope and some understanding of why I do what I do and when I do it.

DENISE: Thank you, Robert. -- We have one question for our petition candidates and then we will take a break for just five minutes after that.

So Robert, if you would just kind of start. Just for the petition candidates, we've got several questions from lots of different folks, is, “Why did you choose to use the petition process?” If you would just answer that question just real quick and we'll just kind of work our way back this way.

ROBERT: Sure. -- So the petition process, I've been through it before in South Dakota. How that happened was a number of folks wanted me to put my name in that process, so I did. [Inaudible - 55:22] of course. I thought about it. I talked to all the people I know that are close -- to people I use for spiritual direction, people I trust and people who tell me straight out whether it's something I can do or not. So I put my name through and then of course, the Holy Spirit had somebody else's head out there.

So I decided at that point that, well, I'll just come back here and continue to do the work that I'm called to do here in Minnesota, and that's what I was doing until this process started again.

After the names were announced, we met the next day. “We” being the Minnesota Committee on Indian Work which is representative of the 11 Native faith communities scattered throughout the state here.

After some conversation, they wanted me to put my name in through the petition process. There, again, I thought about it. And since I've already been through the process before, I felt that that was the next step for me to do.

ERIKA: When the application process began this summer, I was on sabbatical. While I knew it was occurring... Actually, I was in Minnesota for five weeks when all your papers came out. And I wanted to honor my sabbatical. I wanted to be in a stage of paying attention to my rest and my restoration and so I said, “Blessings.” I said, “Blessings. I trust the Holy Spirits can do great things for the Diocese of Minnesota, ECMN.” So I rested.

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When the slate was announced in November, I had a kind of fantastically visceral response to it in which my whole body said, “Wait. I love them,” and that kind of led to a whole exploration. I called friends that I knew that I trusted, that I knew from here, and I said, “Is this nuts to even consider this?” Some of them wisely said, “Yes, this probably is.” [Laughter] “But if it's the Holy Spirit then you need to try. You need to see what it is and to discern with them and see what happens.” So that's the story of how the Holy Spirit shove happened in my life.

KARA: As I said earlier, I’ve been thinking about this position for a while and I did put my name in at the beginning of the process. And then a previously-arranged visit to Minnesota inadvertently interfered with the search process and I was removed from the process.

I continued to pray and think about it. And when the slate came out and there were two great people on the slate, it just seemed like there might be room for a wider conversation. It turned out to be quite a good discernment for me to cold call 14 people in Minnesota and ask if they would sign a petition and send them my essays because the Holy Spirit sometimes speaks directly through other people. And that encouraged me and so I’m glad to be part of it now.

DENISE: Thank you, everyone. -- We are going to take a 5-minute break. And when I say “five minutes,” we're pretty serious about that because as you can tell, we have lots of information to share.

Remember, if you have a question that has come up, well, you have heard our candidates speak.

Blue cards are for clergy. White cards are for lay. And then if you're 22 or younger -- young adults and then youth -- you have a yellow card. So we will collect those. Get up. Stretch your legs. We have some pens here if anybody needs them and we will reconvene in just about five minutes.

[BREAK]

DENISE: Okay. -- Elsie, are we all set up and ready to go? Awesome. Thank you.

Okay. Well I hope everybody enjoyed the break. We have some good questions here in all. So now, we will start with Abbott, linking to this question, I think.

ABBOTT: Okay, great.

DENISE: So what is your experience with faith communities who are led by ministry teams not necessarily stipendiary teams or stipendiary priests?

ABBOTT: First of all, hello to everyone who is watching this from afar. We have been told to be louder so we will try to be a little bit louder so that you can hear better.

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In Diocese of California, there are a few congregations that are... They are yoked, in a way, as it were, and that they share clergy. Some of them have, for years, begun to be thinking about how to expand their ministry models -- to have more team ministry models. And some of what we are hearing--

And this goes for small churches regardless of whether they have had a full-time clergy or part-time clergy or a Super Sunday clergy -- is that when they are engaging in these ministry models to solve a management issue, to fill positions, they experience less vitality than when they are engaging in these teams to really dig deeper into the ministry that God is calling to them to the mission and to begin to imagine how God is calling them to be and what it might look like for them to do that and what resources that they have among themselves to engage in really robust and fulsome ways.

KARA: In Chicago, I was on their congregation’s commission which was the group that worked to bring vitality -- specifically commission congregations in Chicago. In that capacity, we began to explore, share team ministry. But Chicago was way behind Minnesota and we looked towards Minnesota and Michigan to learn about those models. So it’s just a beginning thing that I’m familiar with in my own diocese.

But I think my experience of how powerful shared ministry is comes from my experience from St. John's. I came in to St. John's as the first full-time priest after almost a generation of part-time priests. So almost immediately, I knew that I needed the lay leaders to be in ministry with me and empower them to take charge and to be at staff meetings and ask them nicely to be at staff meetings because they weren’t paid.

That experience of finding the leaders you need in the congregation that you have, I think, is vital to understanding the power of shared and team ministry. Really, every congregation should be operating this way regardless of size.

Right now, on-call for me is a man who was baptized at St. John's. He’s not ordained but he is the pastoral call person because everyone loves and trusts him and knows that he will be there for them, and that is just using the gifts that you have in your congregation to do the ministry you need to do.

ERIKA: My experience with team and shared ministry is really based out of Minnesota. Having grown up here, I remember the early energy for this in the ‘90s and even the ‘80s before that, as communities were trying to figure out, “What should we do next?” I come from a parish that did not have a full-time priest ever and so the teams that were built in those times were essential.

So the name of the game always should be and is, for me, “collaboration” -- who is working together and how can we get everyone working together for the good of the whole? That’s

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where the fun is, right? If we can really see each other's gifts and figure out what it is we all bring to the table then there's opportunities for ministry that we couldn't even have dreamed. So I love this model and so energized by it.

And I think, too, another component of it that I'm really attentive to, is that everything is seasonal, and that's for each of us and our individual ministries as well. So being attuned to the fact that even if you get into a team ministry situation, you're not locked in forever, that the spirit continues to move and so you get to trying new things. And maybe your time is done to this part of the ministry and you want to try this part of the ministry.

So to really continue to be open and not imagine that now it's all decided and done and we don't have to think about it anymore but we're really continuing to listen, continuing to move forward and allowing the Holy Spirit to be active and vibrant in all of these scenarios.

ROBERT: My dad was ordained in 1978. He was ordained in a team ministry model in South Dakota. So I grew up around that. That's all I knew, really.

One of the priests would roll in every fourth Sunday would start talking about it. So it's for me, a new concept.

So growing up in that kind of team modeling, he would always go for trainings in various parts in South Dakota. He was always reading. He was always studying there in his coffee break. He was a working priest so he worked his 9 to 5 job and then weekends, he would be off doing church.

He said one of the most difficult things for him was having to take time off. He'd only get two weeks off for vacation for the year. So to take time off and to try to do a funeral, say, or do some sort of service was really kind of difficult. But fortunately, he had an employer that would sometimes let him go, that would make him come back on a Saturday and do some more work to make up for that lost time.

So that's a hard model to work around when somebody is working his 9 to 5 during a week job. So there have to be a way to figure out how to work around that. I don't know how that looked but--

You know, when I look back at this team ministry models, one could be a very creative. When I look at the way my dad has done ministry, you know, it's probably for me... I don't say this because he's my father. I say because I've known a lot of good priests and he's one of the few good priests that I've known.

CRAIG: In one way or another, through almost all of my ministry, I've been involved with exploring different ways of forming clergy and ministry teams.

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In South Dakota where I was ordained, as Robert referred to, when I was there, there was a huge effort to form ministry teams in that way. When I was in the Diocese of Kansas, I was part of a group that helped form what's called the “Bishop Kemper School for Ministry” which is a lot like your “School for Formation” here which was really about learning how to form clergy and lay leaders in new ways for predominantly rural ministries. And then in Nebraska, Nebraska is one of the partner dioceses for Bishop Kemper School for Ministry.

So I think team ministries are really, really important in this moment in the life of the church. I have to say that I think, from what I can see, team ministries are working about as well in Minnesota as they are in any other place that I know.

One of the things that has impressed me, particularly in Minnesota, is the fact that team ministries are not just being utilized in small rural congregations but also in both small and larger serving congregations. I think that's a great thing because I think team ministries is not just a way to solve a problem, it's really good theology.

In any local faith community, we have to trust that the Holy Spirit is always inviting people in their giftedness into leadership for the sake of offering Jesus’s love to the world.

So I think Minnesota's commitment to team ministry is part of your vitality. And I can see in this next season, one of the challenges or one of the things that you're called to continue to work on, is how to continue to develop that theology in congregations, how to continue to provide the right kinds of support to those ministry teams for the sake of more and more vital congregations.

DENISE: Thank you very much. -- So we'll bring the microphone back down here.

Okay, next question. As you guys know, Minnesota is quite a large state. We also know that we have received an awful lot of questions about the feelings of isolation between the congregations, congressional leaders and the broadness of our state. So how would you as a leader, you as a bishop, lessen that map and handle that struggle that we're going through a lot now?

KARA: A lot of hours in a car. [Laughter] I think you just have to be in relationship with people and you have to be face-to-face with people. Technology is great and we got to keep using it and we have to use it and make it work for us but we got to be with each other. We are very incarnational people. We eat bread together. We put oil on each other's foreheads. We sing together. So we need to be together.

But I think there's also other ways that we can be connected. I remember writing Ember Day letters when I wanted to be a priest and then I was surprised to stop having to write them once I was ordained when it seems like I needed even more to tell my bishop what was going on and whether I was taking care of myself and who I was talking to.

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So I think a yearly Ember Day letter would be a helpful way for clergy and other leaders to stay connected with the bishop and the missionaries so that we know that you are out there taking care of each other and taking care of your people.

My biggest experience with this was -- again, on the congregation's commission -- going to all the ends of our diocese where I was a lead liaison to congregations in tiny rural areas and big mission congregations that were Spanish-speaking and just hearing the stories and bringing those stories back so that all of us could hear the good news that was going on in each of the congregations. So that is part of the job of the missionaries and the bishop, I think, is to share those great stories and keep us connected.

ERIKA: We have the prettiest state in the world, don't we? It's been such a pleasure already to drive around and see our landscape and then to be reminded of the vastness of it as well. I kind of have a lot of thoughts about this because it's of course the first question. You know, people are like, "Oh that's real big. What are we going to do about that?"

I want to be creative with you all, and I don't really have necessarily all the answers, but I think it's really about that listening process -- to go back again to, "How would you feel connected with me as your bishop, with others in your region areas and then across the state? What would give you that feeling state of connection" -- because that's what I would want to help build.

I mean I can dream dreams of what would it look like to office side of [indiscernible - 01:21:45] for the summer months so that I can be up and getting closer. That sounds kind of fun to me. What would that look like? What would it look like to do even more intentional opportunities for gathering with the mission areas?

I don't know what they look like now for you necessarily but what could it look like to kind of build festivals of some sort or another so that we're coming together? How can we connect you based on the ministries that you're doing? This group in Mankato and this group in Grand Marais, they're doing similar stuff but how do we make sure that they're communicating with each other?

So I think it's going to be all about the listening process of saying, "What would really achieve that feeling state?" You can say, "Yes, we're connected" but it's really about, "Does it feel that way?" So can we all collectively creatively get together and say, "This might achieve that." Try some stuff. Maybe it fails. Maybe some other stuff succeeds -- but to continue trying.

ROBERT: Well since I've been in this position as the missionary for Department of Indian Work, I've spent a lot of time in my car... my vehicle. [Laughter] I have a 2012 Toyota and I have just put about 155,000 miles on it. It's nowhere compared to what I know Bishop Brian and even Bishop Jelinek, the way they were driving through various places and points throughout this

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huge state.

I've been up and down the road so many times that my car knows by heart, it seems like. [Laughter] But it's also a place where I find a little solace and a little time to gather my thoughts, think and to listen to music and get on the phone and do some business and that kind of thing.

But for me, what's more important is that I have a face-to-face with people and that's the way I build bridges. That's how I get to know individuals. That's how I get to know their faith communities. That's how I get to know their communities, places they live, how I get to know their grandkids.

Every time I go back to, say, like Wilder, I noticed these kids are taller and taller. When I first met them, they were all these little kids running around but now they're taller and taller. So the goal is how do we keep them coming back in church because that's some of what I hear from the grandparents and from the mothers and fathers. They're concerned about the church.

So bringing people together, I think it's important that, as a bishop, one needs to know their flock. They need to know their sheep. They need to be able to connect them together.

CRAIG: That's a great question. I think I would say about four things about the challenge of connection and geography in Minnesota. The first one, and a couple of others have said this, being the bishop of Minnesota requires a lot of time in a car.

I said earlier that it would be really important to me to spend as much time in local faith communities as I can because that's the job and because that's where the most important ministry happens. So I think it's really critical for a bishop to do as much as they can to be present in congregations.

One of the ways that I would want to do that, especially early on in my ministry in Minnesota, would really be to minimize the number of commitments that I have outside of Minnesota. A bishop's work really is in their diocese. They're bishop for the whole church. They have responsibilities. And I would honor those especially early on as I'm getting to know ECMN and getting to know the work of a bishop, to really try to minimize those commitments.

Another way, I think, to deal with the challenge of connection and geography is to focus on the quality of time in local faith communities as much as the quantity. So I would want to do some regional residencies in a particular part of Minnesota to try to get to know as many people there as possible and the particularities of a local culture.

But I think part of the longing that I hear is not just for a connection with the person in the office of a bishop although that's really important. But I hear a longing for connection with one another for a sense that everybody in Minnesota is on the same team and rowing in the same

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direction and connected to what's happening in vastly different parts of the state. And I think part of that is about finding ways to share stories.

There’s even in the time that I've been in this search process, there's incredible innovation and new life springing up in Minnesota and finding more ways to share that broadly across ECMN, and then finally, really working to articulate a shared vision that comes from deep listening around ECMN. Having a shared vision is one way across all the diversity of geography that all of us can feel like we're part of the same thing.

ABBOTT: In my current position, I spend a lot of time traveling around to all of the churches in the Bay Area and the geography is of course much, much smaller. The traffic, however, can be that sometimes I spend many hours going a very short distance. [Laughter] But as I've been doing that over the last couple of months I have been in this search process, I've been thinking, “Wow, what might this be like in a geography as vast as Minnesota?”

So I've been having somewhat playful conversations with folks around about this. One is an idea that has come up here already -- what might it be to have a satellite office in another part of the state. Is that part of the conversation -- what that might that look like. Where might that be? And maybe even have a missionary out of that office.

Some friends and I playfully talked about me load not my dog, Alice, into an RV and spending a lot of time traveling around so that I could spend, if I were a bishop, significant, substantial, substantive periods of time in the various mission areas.

As Craig just said, another thing that I sense though is this deep sense and desire for connection. So I'm wondering, as part of the shared leadership, as part of community, how there might be ways for... The bishop might not be the only one who does visitations, how we might cultivate different ways of connecting substantively across the geography by seeing and experiencing each other's ministries in meaningful and powerful ways.

DENISE: Thank you very much. -- Okay, we are to your questions. So I'm just going to just kind of organize this a little bit by color and I’m just going to pick them out, and so here we go. So Erika, are you ready?

ERIKA: Sure.

DENISE: This is fabulous for my editorial.

ERIKA: I guess. [Laughter]

DENISE: How important is it for the Episcopal Church/ECMN to exist in 20, 50 and/or 100 years? -- How important is It for the Episcopal Church to exist, any ECMN, in 20, 50, 100 years?

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ERIKA: Oh that’s so fun. What good visioning that could bring, huh?

My former bishop, Kirk Smith, once said in a meeting, “I’m an Episcopalian but I’m a Christian first. I’m a Jesus-follower first,” and that was inspiring to me. That moved me because he, like all of us, love the Episcopal Church. It’s where we found a center, where we found a connection to God that’s so deep and profound that we come to know better who we are and who we were made to be -- because of this church that we love. I mean this... Gosh, this is the heart of us in so many ways.

So in lots of ways for me, personally, and us, collectively, it is wildly important that our witness as the Episcopal Church remains. And I have no idea what that will look like because I don’t think people 20 years ago knew what this church would look like today and 20 years before that and 50 years before that. They couldn’t necessarily have imagined all that we are.

And we’re in a period right now, I think, of change. Not that we haven’t been for a long time, I guess. But we kind of have this upward trend for a long time and now we’re in this thing that we kind of nervously call “decline” and we don’t know necessarily what to do with it or how to still feel bold and brave about our place in Christianity in spite of that or even within because of that.

So I think all of that is to say we have something important to offer in the religious landscape and so we need to hold to that. We have charisma, of openness, of willingness to live in mystery that is so dear and important in this whole story. So that’s the thing that I hope continues for all of these years -- that our commitment to that part of the Jesus’ story continues always.

ROBERT: If I had to stand up here and imagine, which I’m doing, so I’m thinking about it [laughter]... To imagine what it looked like a hundred years and if I look at the current trends and the way things are going, it’s not going to look the way it is today.

I say that because after some of the people I’ve heard talked about it, specifically someone like Phyllis Tickle when she was alive... She wrote a book on “The Great Emergence” and she talked about how we’re in this sort of period of time where things are shifting and changing but we don’t really realize that we’re in it but it’s happening. When I think about that and I think about the church that I grew up in, it no longer exists the way I remember it. It’s changed. The change has been slow. The change has been quick in some areas.

We can grow up with a 1928 prayer book and now we used in 1979 and now we’re looking at doing another further revision. So in a hundred years, all I can say is that it’ll probably be the church. There will probably be some forms of liturgy that we’ll use that might be based on the prayer book. It might not be based on the prayer book. But one thing I’m certain of is that we’ll still be engaging the gospel and it will still calls out on what to do in the world.

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CRAIG: We live in a world that is full of bitter divisions between different groups of people. We live in a world where so many people are on the margins of so many different communities in different ways. And in the midst of that world, we have been entrusted with a gospel that says that everyone is worthy of love and embrace. We have been entrusted with a gospel that says no matter what divides us, the most important thing about any of us is that we are beloved children of God.

So given the fact that that's the gospel that we've been entrusted with as disciples and as Episcopalians, I think it's critically important that ECMN continue to exist well into the future.

And really good news from my perspective is that if what we say we believe about God is true, that God created the world, that God sustains the world and then God will stop at nothing to find and embrace and heal and love us then we have every reason, despite all of the uncertainties in this moment that we're facing, that God is going to have the church that God needs to continue to love and embrace the world.

The shape of our church and the shape of ECMN will look very different many years from now than it does today. But if what we say we believe day-by-day and week-by-week is true, we have no reason to be afraid that God will continue to shape the church in all of us that God needs.

ABBOTT: I was born and raised an Episcopalian and half-jokingly said at times that there were times in my life or particularly back when I was in my 20s, when I tried really hard not to believe in God but it never occurred to me not to be an Episcopalian. [Laughter]

When I was in seminary at the Ecumenical Seminary and we'd go to the Ecumenical chapel, sometimes I would walk out and look at my seminary friends and feel like, "Why am I an Episcopalian. That was amazing." And other times I would walk out and go, "That's why I'm an Episcopalian." [Laughter]

The Episcopal Church is... It's in my bones. It's in my blood. It is who I am. And I honestly do believe that the well of our tradition is deep. The insights of our tradition are very, very deep and that God needs us -- I have heard it said recently that we can't kill the church because if we could, we would have. We certainly tried [laughter] -- because this is God's church. And I do believe that God needs the Episcopal Church.

And with that, I'm about to say something controversial, and that is, if I came to the point where I believed deep down in my soul that somehow the Episcopal Church needed to shed itself for God's mission to thrive, for resurrection to happen, I hope -- I hope -- that I would choose God's mission.

KARA: As I told my folks in a very Catholic Chicago, "God, I'm pretty sure, does not care at all about brand names." And as much as I love the Episcopal Church, I think that God's work and

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God's mission will continue no matter what.

I also think we have a unique gift to offer the world at this time. I think we are in an Episcopal moment. At least in my congregation, when people come through the door, I hear people say, “This is the place I belong. This is the place I've been looking for. This is the place that feeds me. This is the place that allows me to ask questions.”

And I believe that when we are doing that, and as long as we are doing that, we will draw people in and we will also go out from our doors and serve and do God's work.

I'm not afraid. I am not afraid of the future because... We know the story of Egypt and the liberation and that is the work that God is doing. And yes, we have to think about buildings and budgets, and we have, but if we listen, I know that we will be led into new life and into new purpose. Let's not be afraid about it.

DENISE: Thank you. – Okay, we have one more question from the floor and then we will do our closing statements from the candidates.

So Robert, I believe you're next for the first one. -- Okay, so this is from one of our clergy. It says, “Use “evangelism” in my role as bishop in a sentence.” [Laughter] -- Use “evangelism” in my role as bishop in a sentence.

FEMALE: You don't have to diagram that. [Laughter]

ROBERT: Oh I think the last question was a trick question so let's do it. To use it in a sentence... I don't know. I mean it's one of those words that we rarely use in the Episcopal Church, right -- to say “evangelism.” At least, I didn't hear much growing up until more recently.

So as a bishop, I'd say, one thing that we're all called to do is to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ and to go out there and to live it. That's, for me, proclaiming the Good News and using the word “evangelism” -- to go out there, to proclaim the Good News, to live it, to work and to be part of it.

CRAIG: “Evangelism,” which is proclaiming with our whole lives the Good News, that because of Jesus no one is ever too lost to be found, nothing is ever too broken to be mended and nothing is so dead that it can't find new life again, is one of my chief responsibilities as bishop -- both to live that evangelism in my own life and to help inspire and teach and equip the faith communities of everyone entrusted to my care to do that with their whole lives.

There is nothing that any of us is called to that is more important than telling a world that is starving for the good news of God's love that is revealed to us in Jesus.

ABBOTT: Evangelism is, at least in part, about translating the gospel -- translating the gospel into every time and every place and every context -- “Translating the gospel.” And as bishop,

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my work will be about leading the way in translating the gospel.

Now, I was just in New York, literally right before I came here and had this surprising opportunity to go see Hamilton. And for those of you who might not know, Hamilton is very, very faithful to history and faithful reinterpretation of this moment in our history and it's incredible. It is a translation of that moment in history in compelling ways.

I believe that our work is about figuring out and considering how we can continue to translate the gospel in every day and every age.

I'm thinking about a fresher start that I recently led with some of our newer clergy where we engaged the story of the woman at the well. One of the exercises that we did was to retell the story for them to think about it in their context and to retell the story in their context who would be at the well. Would the well even be a well? How is this story being told today? Where is it showing up in our lives, in our communities today?

So I would see my work as continually calling us to this work of evangelism -- that is translating the gospel in our day and age.

KARA: I think the chief role of the bishop is to be the evangelist. And it's the easiest thing the bishop does because the bishop has a funny hat. He's paid to be an evangelist. Even the color, I find... I almost never have to apologize for talking about God. I think the hard thing is being a layperson and being empowered to be an evangelist.

I talk a lot in my congregation of many introverts about soft evangelism. You go to a restaurant, it's a great meal and you post it online, "Five stars. The scrambled eggs were perfect." That's how we are about church. When we're fed, we want to tell people about it.

We do things like get a newsletter from our diocesan office and I say, "Leave it in the dentist's office. Leave it on the train." Do some soft evangelism. But true evangelism is when we feel courageous enough to tell each other how God has changed our lives and how we've been transformed. And if we can tell our own stories to each other, we can have the courage to tell them to others and that is how we touch lives from one person to another.

ERIKA: My job as bishop is evangelism. [Sits -- Laughter] I like to be obedient.

I think sometimes evangelism seems so daunting. It's like you got to go out and get out there. It's so daunting because... I mean A] we're Episcopalians. I heard Episcopalians described as evangelists who, if you're out fishing, you invite the fish to jump into the boat. You don't like put the net out, right? So there is something about that for us.

But the experience I've had at our parish has been that it really can be quite simple. We had two intentional times in our parish life, one in which we decided to become a welcoming parish

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and we taught us how to do it. During the piece, we'd say, "Please turn if you don't know your neighbor. Would you introduce yourself?" We became, over time, a welcoming parish. People talked to each other and got to know each other.

After that, we said, "Let's become an inviting parish," and we literally taught us how to do that. This is what it looks like to have these conversations. And just like Kara said, if you're going to talk about the brunch you had, it's just as easy to say, "Yeah, I had a great morning. I went to church. Do you have a church? Would you like to come sometime?" And over time, we've seen this slowly develop so that now, more times than not, people coming out our parish doors are saying, "Hey, this is my neighbor that I brought with me today. This is my friend that I brought with me today."

Evangelism doesn't all have to be mountaintop preaching. It is about teaching us how easy it can be and empowering us with boldness, big and small, to get out there and share the Good News.

DENISE: Thank you. -- Okay, I was a little wrong. We have one more question and then we're going to wrap up real quick with your final segment. Okay guys, how would you see yourself getting involved with the youth of ECMN?

CRAIG: I have to say, from everything that I've seen in this discernment process and everything I've been able to learn, ECMN has a really incredible youth ministry program in lots of different ways and has had a really great program for a number of years.

So a couple of things, I would say. One, I'm going to camp every year. [Laughter] That's been a part of my ministry in different places and different ways of spending time at camp. Camp is such an important part of the life of any diocesan youth program.

And when clergy and the bishop, in particular, and other lay leaders in the diocese show up at camp, it communicates a great deal about how critical youth are to our common life together and to our common witness together. So that's one way that I would want to be deeply involved in the youth program.

But the other way that I think a bishop can be involved in a youth program that's really effective is, again, in that sort of role of being a pollinator and a storyteller.

One of the things, when you have a really vibrant youth program like you have in ECMN, that means that every single church in ECMN has a youth group and it's called "TEC and Camp" and all of the other things that are involved in the diocesan youth program.

So one of the things that a bishop could do to be involved is to tell that story and to make sure, when the bishop is present in different local faith communities, the bishop is communicating all of the ways that the youth in that particular faith community can be involved in camp and help

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telling the stories of how that can be transformational in the lives of young people and how that can be transformational in the life of the whole region.

It's all of our responsibilities to make sure that we're communicating to the youth of the diocese -- that they are important, that they have a role to play in the leadership of proclaiming the Good News of Jesus in a particular place. And I think it's important for the bishop to take a lead role in that work.

ABBOTT: I often hear it said that “Youth are the future of the church.” And I want to say over and over again, “Youth are the “Now” of the church.” Youth are our leaders now. Youth have rich gifts as rich as anyone else in the church to offer now, and to do that in ways that permeate the full leadership opportunities of the church.

When I was serving as a rector, there was a young man who was interested in the governance of the church and compelled by it and had gifts to offer and so I supported him in running for the vestry. He wasn't elected. But after not being elected, it opened the eyes of the congregation that this young man had incredible gifts to offer to the leadership of the church now and so he was subsequently elected to be one of the delegates to our annual convention

So I would see my role as a bishop as encouraging us to think about all of the ways that youth can be meaningfully-engaged in all levels of governance and all levels of ministry and all levels of leadership to bring what they have to offer -- I know within canonical parameters [laughs] -- to what they have to offer so that they truly can bring their full selves and offer their full selves and to bring their gifts to the church in every way possible.

KARA: It's my impression that ministry for children and youth in ECMN is really strong, at least from the pictures, small and large, of pageants and camp that I've seen. I definitely would like to go to camp. I did that in Chicago. And also TEC, being a chaplain, was a lot of fun.

But I'm curious about young adults which I think “youth” is also referring to. We had a question at the last forum about deacons and deacon ministry and I wonder about calling people to leadership ordained as deacons or as other leaders -- really young. Deacons are people who are called to be with the most marginalized in our community and youth often are those people.

So I'm curious about what it might be to hand leadership over to young adults and ask them, “What should the Episcopal Church in Minnesota look like and how can you get us there?”

ERIKA: As I've said, I was raised in very small parishes and so I never had a youth group growing up. What became my youth groups were Catholic Episcopal camp, the St. Paul Teens Encounter Christ program and so many other interactions like that.

So for me, I feel like there's a three-fold hope that I would have about interacting with youth. One, I would continually invest in those things because I personally benefited from them. I still

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have relationships today that I had with people that I met when I was eight years old. So those things are deeply important to me to continue what's already been happening here. And the resurgence of the camping ministry here just thrills my heart. It's wonderful.

Another component that I would want to encourage is I think a deep and growing yearning amongst young people to really be acknowledged for the self-work that they're doing. I mean we all need to know ourselves. And wasn't it lonely to be a teenager? Wasn't it just... I mean there's just so many things that we don't quite know how to deal with all on our own -- so to raise ways that young people want to know and be known and encourage them in that and particularly for them to know themselves and to feel grounded in that. Ministries like that are really important.

I love [indiscernible - 01:55:39] today. Part of their mission statement was about self-knowledge. I want to encourage kids to know themselves and to really know what God's put in them so that they can value it and go forth into the world with strength.

And then I really want to hear from them. I want to know what they think a bishop should be for them. I want to do more listening and hear, “Where do you think I need to be present in your lives? Where will that make the most difference? And how can we feel connected and strong together as active parts of this whole kingdom work that we're doing together?”

ROBERT: When I first arrived here 14 years ago, it was after the following summer they had the big Episcopal youth event. It was down in San Antonio, Texas. Our then commissioner for youth ministries, Bronwyn Skov, came up to me and said, “Hey Robert, would you like to ride in the bus with a bunch of kids in San Antonio,” which I thought about. “Sure, I could do that,” not really thinking about the whole scope. [Laughter] And that was a 26-hour drive. [Laughter]

These kids never slept and I didn't either. I just remember going somewhere in the dark night of Oklahoma and it would just be loud and the bus never seemed to stop. It just went on and on and on. [Laughter] Long story short, I learned that you can't be afraid to just jump in there especially as a priest or a clergy person.

Now growing up in the church, the only time we'd meet the bishop is... Well I think I met him maybe a couple of times. Once, when I was confirmed and the other time, maybe a church camp that I went to.

One of the models that Bishop Brian said is that he's present and I think that's something that needs to be continued. It's for the young people to know their bishop, to learn about who he or she is, to listen to their stories and vice versa. It takes a lot of work. It takes a lot of time. But fortunately, that happens during the summer so a lot of our time is downtime, so we could spend our time with young people.

Now when I got out of seminary, one of my first jobs as a Curate was youth ministries and they gave it to me because I was the young guy on the staff at the time. You know, I was young once.

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[Laughter] They gave it to me and they said, “Okay, this is your charge. You are now the chaplain to the pre-school. You’re going to do youth ministries.” And I said, “But I know nothing about it.” “Listen, don’t worry. You’ll learn.” So I learned. So what I bring today is 20 years of experience working with young people.

DENISE: Thank you. -- Okay, if you will hand the microphone to Abbott, we will have her do her closing statements. And I have been asked... You guys are fabulous. We know that. One minute. [Laughter]

ABBOTT: What?

DENISE: Do as quick as you can If you can. [Laughter] We’ll just ask out of respect for everybody’s time.

ABBOTT: They cut it in half for me this morning.

DENISE: Oh we’ll stick on your fate. [Laughter] No. Yes, we will be gracious. But please, just wrap it up.

ABBOTT: Hooh, really quickly. -- You know I have been chasing after belonging in a lot of ways my whole life. And one of the ways that I have nurtured belonging is through the people and some places, really making myself a home -- in West Virginia and Virginia, now in California. And God-willing, creek don’t rise as we see in West Virginia, as God-willing, the lakes don't rise here in Minnesota. So that is creating a home.

But really, my deepest sense of belonging is around the table. Around the table, Jesus died to set that table. Jesus shed blood to set that table. And Jesus asks us to make space of belonging around that table for everyone. And sometimes that means scooching over a little bit and making room for people.

If I were so blessed as to be your bishop, I would revel in sitting around that table with you all and inviting people into the deepest sense of belonging around that table, too.

KARA: The retired Bishop of Alaska, Steven Charleston, just recently wrote a reflection about any time that a community chooses a leader that we are holding up a mirror, and I believe that's what we've been doing tonight. There are five really good and gifted people up here. And the question is, “Who are you and who are you looking to partner with to go where you're going?” And I wonder who you will choose to tell the truth, to shape the vision, to hold each other accountable and to be transformed together.

You made me a Christian and gave joy and meaning to my life and I am curious about continuing that conversation with each other and with the community of Minnesota.

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ERIKA: Friends, I'll just end by saying "Thank you." Thank you for the life that you have given me, the spirit of God that you planted in me from my childhood. I am grateful and full heart tonight just being with you and getting to dream a vision with you of what's next for all of you in this place. It's all joy and it's all going to be joy because you will continue a kingdom work together.

I've never imagined seeking to be a bishop before and you are the only ones I could ever imagine serving in this way. I don't seek to be a bishop but to be the bishop of Minnesota and it's because I love you.

And it's not just the feeling state of love that I want to share with you but love and action -- all of us really linking arms and moving forward into a future together in which we make God's good love known.

ROBERT: Well, I can say without a doubt that if I went back, rewind about 20 years, I would have never imagined being here in Minnesota and serving as the missionary for DIW and Multicultural Ministries and being the vicar of All Saints Indian Mission.

With that said, it's given me the opportunity to get to know Minnesota in a way that I think very few are cleared you have that kind of opportunity.

I preached here once. Someone has reminded me. It was a few years ago. They reminded me about the sermon that I preached. -- I'm sorry. [Laughter] You never really know what people hear and listen to. When you're speaking, you just go out there and you try to speak from the heart and just try to speak from what the gospel is saying to oneself.

Now, I have no idea what it's really, truly like to be a bishop. I've certainly known a lot of them. I've certainly talked to a lot of them. I've talked to Bishop Bob Anderson before he died. He was one of the ones who really helped me look at the call to come here because he was down in LA, retired, and we talked at great lengths about the work that was started here and that continues.

So I would look forward to do that in another capacity if called to be your bishop because I've come to love the Episcopal Church in Minnesota. I've come to love Minnesota. I've come to love the people here. Thank you.

CRAIG: This is a moment in the life of our church where a lot of people are anxious about the future and a lot of people are anxious about declining numbers and other things like that.

I want to believe that while I am not naive about the challenges of climbing the mountains that are in front of us in this moment, I'm also far from thinking that this is a fearful time. I thank God every day for the privilege of being a disciple and a leader in the church in this moment because all of us who are following Jesus in this moment are being invited to join with the Holy

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Spirit, informing the church that God needs for the future.

We do that by connecting deeply with each other, by recommitting to just the basic practices of what it means to follow Jesus and to offer Jesus's love to the world. And I think that ECMN is in a uniquely strong position to do that work.

Whatever the Holy Spirit does in this election, I want you to know how grateful I am to all of you in ECMN, both of the work that you're doing together and for the gift that you are to the wider Episcopal Church.

DENISE: Thank you, Craig. -- Okay, I'm going to turn it over to Joy.

JOY: Please clap now.

DENISE: Thank you, Joy. Yes, please.

[Applause]

JOY: Thank you all for your bravery and your vulnerability in being in this space for us. And thank you, gathered community.

So I'm actually going to invite our candidates to take a seat amongst the congregation so we are all facing the altar together as one body.

[To the candidates] So why don't you all go and find yourself a spot -- because this is the reality of the church. We are one body and we are all facing, in the best sense, in one direction and that direction is towards Christ.

So while they are getting settled, I invite you to pull out your prayer book. If you do need to leave, I completely understand. But we're going to end our night, for those who can stay, with Compline which is the bedtime prayers of the church.

Better?

FEMALE: Yes.

JOY: Oh magically better.

FEMALE: Magically better.

JOY: If you didn't hear me, whatever I said was profound. [Laughter]

So we're going to end our night with the nighttime prayers of the church with Compline and

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that can be found on page 127 of your prayer book.

And we purposely are not having any of the candidates lead worship because candidates need a chance to be with. So here we are with each other.

Once again, that's page 127.

The Lord Almighty, grant us a peaceful night and a perfect end.

ALL: Amen.

Our help is in the Name of the Lord.

ALL: The maker of heaven and earth.

Let us confess our sins to God.

ALL: Almighty God, our heavenly Father, we have sinned against you through our own fault, in thought and word and deed and in what we have left undone.

For the sake of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, forgive us all our offenses

and grant that we may serve you in newness of life, to the glory of your Name, Amen.

May the Almighty God grant us forgiveness of all our sins and the grace and comfort of the Holy Spirit.

ALL: Amen.

O God, make speed to save us.

ALL: O Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

As it was in the beginning is now and will be forever, Amen.

Alleluia.

The psalm is found on page 131, Psalm 134. We will speak it in unison.

ALL: Behold now, bless the Lord, all you servants of the Lord.

You have stand by night in the House of the Lord.

Lift up your hands in the Holy Place and bless the Lord.

The Lord who made heaven and earth bless you out of Zion.

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit

As it was in the beginning is now and will be forever, Amen.

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*Come to me, all who labor and are heavy-laden and I will give you rest.
Take my yoke upon you and learn from me
for I am gentle and lowly in heart and you will find rest for your souls
for my yoke is easy and my burden is light.
ALL: Thanks be to God.*

Continuing on page 132 with the versicles and responses.

*Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit;
ALL: For you have redeemed me, O Lord, O God of truth.
Keep us, O Lord, as the apple of your eye;
ALL: Hide us under the shadow of your wings.*

*Lord, have mercy.
ALL: Christ have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.*

*ALL: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who trespass against us
and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil, Amen.*

*Lord, hear our prayer.
ALL: And let our cry come to you.*

Let us pray.

*Be our light in the darkness, O Lord, and in your great mercy
defend us from all perils and dangers of this night
for the love of your only Son, our Savior Jesus Christ,
ALL: Amen.*

*Keep watch, dear Lord, with those who work, or watch
or weep this night, and give your angels charge over those who sleep.
Tend to the sick, Lord Christ, give rest to the weary, bless the dying,
soothe the suffering, pity the afflicted, shield the joyous
and all for your love’s sake,
ALL: Amen.*

At this time, I invite you to call out the names of those for who you pray.
[Calls out the names]

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*ALL: Guide us waking, O Lord and guard us sleeping
that awake we may watch with Christ and asleep we may rest in peace.*

Together:

*Lord, you now have set your servant free
to go in peace as you have promised.
For these eyes of mine have seen the Savior
whom you have prepared for all the world to see,
a Light to enlighten the nations and the glory of your people Israel.
Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit
as it was in the beginning is now and will be forever, Amen.*

*Guide us waking, O Lord, and guard us sleeping
that awake we may watch with Christ and asleep we may rest in peace.*

*Let us bless the Lord.
ALL: Thanks be to God.*

*The almighty and merciful Lord, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, bless us and keep us,
ALL: Amen.*

JOY: I know it is our inclination to turn to our neighbor and begin to speak. I invite you to resist that temptation. It is an ancient practice to hold a silence from the last words of Compline until the following morning’s prayers.

And so if I can have candidates and Transition Committee and those who are going to be on the bus, head on out. I invite the rest of the congregation, hold silence and prayer for them. It has been a long day and they have many hours and miles to travel.

So thank you once again in active part. Please go in peace. Love and serve the Lord and get some good rest.

[END OF TRANSCRIPT]