



Report from the Canon Missioner at the 2012 Annual Meeting

This is the last time I will preside at our Annual Parish Meeting! With the help of Ann and John, I will stumble through the masterfully prepared script for the fourth time and we will fulfill our legal obligations, elect new vestry members and delegates to convention, make some appointments, thank and honor a few members of the body, review milestones and challenges, and celebrate our life together.

My time with you is ending soon and I want to tell you in this formal and official moment how deeply honored I have been to travel with you on this journey. In a few months we will reach a fork in the road and say goodbye to each other. In Portuguese there is a word that is quite fitting for our leave-taking – there is not really a comparable word in English but I will try to convey the meaning as best I can. The word is *saudades* and it is a way of parting that speaks of the melancholy of endings and the acknowledgement of what will never be. We part with a sweet remembrance of our time together and the deep sorrow that it is now time to take leave of each other.

In the short term you and I still have much work to do and in a few minutes we will talk about the call process. Acknowledging that the timing of the call is not fully in our control, I made a decision to retire at the end of May. In liturgical time, I will leave after the Great Feast of Pentecost. To ease the financial burden to the Cathedral in this last bit of transition, I have asked that my salary be reduced by 20 % during the first five months of the year and I will begin to focus my energy where it is most needed in these remaining months as I prepare to leave. Bishop Rickel and Canon Anthony will be working with the Vestry during the summer months to ensure a seamless transition for Dean Seven.

Three years ago we completed a strategic plan that was the work of this body in transition. The guiding star statement is "Welcoming all to live the light of Christ!" Our core values are to "welcome, inspire, serve and transform." This is a beautiful vision and a compelling call. Today we continue to serve this vision as we prepare for Dean Seven.

The call committee is hard at work and the names are in hand. Out of the twenty something names, one will rise and be called. That is exciting. The names on my list are: Carolyn, Sophie, Eli, Michael, Jen, Izzy, Maxine, Sandra, and Patrick. I have spent

much of my adult life balancing between the needs of the community I serve and the family I love. At this point in time, my family needs me. And I need them. I will continue my pilgrim life as priest but now will travel between Seattle, Baltimore and Phoenix sharing a more intimate feast with this small beloved community.

My friend and colleague, Rob Voyle is a leading expert in appreciative inquiry and he says a good description of a robust human being includes these three words: Fierce, tender and mischievous. This is what we should be looking for in a leader. I love these words and the implication of complexity they convey. And I offer these words to the call committee and vestry as an apt description of Dean Seven. To be fierce is to be courageous; to be tender is to know how to enter into the pain and suffering of another. But to be mischievous is to take oneself and others lightly, to be playful and ready to see new ways and laugh easily. These words convey an image of one's character and respond to the questions: "Tell me about a time when...." Look for the candidates who possess this profile! But first, let's not get ahead of ourselves.

The question "*How* will *who* lead *whom* to do *what*?" is a provocative one and it is my hope to unpack it a bit today.

We are obsessed with "how" and "who" in this country, which is increasingly defined by style and personality rather than skill and character. But here is the truth: we must begin with "whom" and "what." Over the past four years we have been actively engaged with both those categories. Early consultations with Peter Steinke, the CAT and Core Team activities have drilled down into the DNA of Saint Mark's, the "whom" part of the question, our corporate identity.

It has not always been pretty, the most troubling concern defined by the Vital Sign's Report as our rector centric orientation. It was a surprise to the research consultant to see all five drivers of satisfaction, focused on the role of the dean, a very unusual statistical outcome and at odds with an expressed core value of lay leadership. The resulting cognitive dissonance remains a risk factor that cannot be ignored as the search unfolds. It tracks with our secular political culture where satisfaction and dissatisfaction are so closely aligned with the perceived performance of our president *but* in the more intimate and collegial realm of the church, especially our contemporary Episcopal church, it is problematic.

This is a cautionary note. Your new dean, Dean Seven must be seen, first and foremost as a human being, neither sanctified nor demonized, a woman or man called to serve in a particular role with its attendant functions and responsibilities. To be clear about what skills and character are needed first means knowing who we are and what is our mission. *How* will *who* lead *whom* to do *what* will not matter if we are clear about our identity and our mission and call someone who is fierce, tender and mischievous.

Two ways of leadership emerge from our gospel: speaking with authority and speaking the truth in love. One involves leading from the front, the other from behind. One is direct and compelling, the other nuanced, encouraging, and occasionally gently chiding.

Both are sacrificial and transformative. Both are vital to the health of our communities. Neither is contrary to a body poised to serve and collaborate in many wonderful and diverse ways.

So now I will break with tradition to make an announcement. I have been thinking a lot about our Pro Christo award and the amazing people who have been recipients these many years. And this year we will have a recipient who models these two forms of leadership – that of a shepherd and that of the sheepdog – one in front seeking the cool clear water and the good green grass, watching out for the places of danger, and seeking the lost along the way, always ready to sacrifice self when the wolf draws near. And then that other way of leading, the way of following behind, alongside, constantly on alert, coaxing, encouraging, keeping the flock moving forward and connected. Both are ways of the heart, both are necessary for the well being of the flock. Speaking with authority and speaking the truth in love, leading from the heart.

I am trying hard to make this easy for our recipient because she is the last person who wants to come up here and so I ask you to help me honor Elsie Ford as I come down to her.

At the end of the movie In the Name of Heaven, the choir has taken the stage but their cantor/director has not arrived. Everyone is waiting for them to sing. It is awkward until finally one voice begins to sound a tone, and then another and another and another until the whole choir is vibrating with sound and then the audience begins, it is glorious, they are one, it is a glimpse of heaven and that is enough.

Be not anxious, the dean has not yet arrived but you know how to sing. Be not afraid.....you are the Body of Christ, the beloved community. Amen.

The Rev. Canon Rebecca L. McClain
Canon Missioner