

## Core Values

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***We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose*** (Romans 8.28).

St. Paul wrote those words in approximately 50 AD, probably toward the middle to end of that decade. The Epistle (letter) to the church in Rome is Paul's most precise theological statement, and he wrote it in the midst of Gentile-Jewish tensions in the church. The letter is an amazing treatise on the body of Christ; and, throughout this writing, St. Paul discusses God's purposes, and by extension, the purposes of those who call themselves followers of Jesus Christ. He also reminds his readers that no one has an "edge" on God, but that all have fallen short of the glory of God (3.23).

During the spring meetings of both the Executive Board and the Standing Committee, your elected leadership decided that it is very important to chart our course as a diocesan family. We cannot wait for someone else to come in and take care of business for us. We must be about the active work of identifying and living into our vocation. Why? Because God has called us (and many, many before us) to be a *"royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that (we) may declare the praises of him who called (us) out of darkness into his marvelous light"* (1 Peter 2.9).

Subsequent conversations led to the idea of a diocesan wide effort to discover, or re-discover, the core values that will assist us in achieving a bright and Godly future as a diocese. This led to more discussion about core beliefs and our core purpose. Our Spring Clergy Day was given over to this topic as well. For the first time in recent memory, the Executive Board and the Standing Committee were called together on August 30 by the bishop to seriously engage the question of diocesan core values.

As you may know, this same conversation will be held on October 27 for bishop's committees, vestries, and other congregational leadership in the seven convocations of the diocese. All of this is meant to help equip us to be *"salt and light"* in the world (Matt 5.13-14; Mark 9.50; Luke 14.34).

Jim Collins and Jerry Porras, the authors of *Built To Last*, define "core purpose" as an organization's fundamental reason for being. It is the guiding star, and though it does not change, it does inspire change. "Core values" are the essential and timeless guiding principles of the organization.

Understanding and claiming both our core purpose and our core values are essential elements of our life together if we are to be "salt and light" in our world. Taking this seriously will strengthen our witness, and we are clearly called by Jesus, through the Scripture, to be witnesses to the glory of God in thought, word, and deed.

Our Judeo-Christian legacy is built upon people rising to the challenges of their day. It is my hope and expectation that we, too, will rise to our own particular challenges, and in so doing will contribute to a spiritually healthy and strong legacy in God's Church.

And speaking of challenges, Bishop Reed and I will be attending the House of Bishops meeting in New Orleans from September 20-25. By any standard, this is a historic meeting. The Archbishop of Canterbury and members of the Primates Standing Committee and the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC) Standing Committee will be our guests.

You might recall that the Windsor Report identifies four "instruments of unity" in the Anglican Communion. They are the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Primates, the ACC, and the Lambeth Conference (which is scheduled to convene in July 2008). So, at our House of Bishops meeting in September, three of the instruments of unity will be represented. I feel sure this kind of attention has not been focused on a meeting of the House of Bishops in the past, though maybe it should have been.

In New Orleans, the House of Bishops will hear from the Archbishop, he will hear from us, we will discuss our response to the Primates' Communique issued last February, and we will have deep and serious conversation about the Anglican Communion and our place in it. Bishop Reed and I appreciate your prayers not only for us, but for the House of Bishops, The Episcopal Church, The Instruments of Unity, and The Anglican Communion.

I began this month's column with a quote from Romans about being called according to God's purpose. I have every hope and expectation that the Lord will indeed bless our work as a diocesan family as we seek to live into our purpose by identifying our core values. I trust that our lives will be shaped and strengthened by God's Holy Spirit in these endeavors.

As Paul wrote the Letter to the Romans in the shadow of Gentile-Jewish tensions, so we have tensions peculiar to our own day, and even as we address those, we continue to move forward with our ministry as the family of the Diocese of West Texas. It is a cause for great rejoicing, through all of the circumstances and blessings and challenges. *What shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us?* (Romans 8.31)