



The Episcopal Diocese of North Dakota

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Office of the Bishop

August 17, 2021

Dear people of the Episcopal Diocese of North Dakota

Grace and peace to you in the name of Jesus, who is the Way of Love.

We are now in our eighth month together, since you welcomed me into this New Season of Ministry in the Diocese of North Dakota as your Bishop Provisional. It has been a rich and rewarding time for me as I have come to know so many of you and have had the joy of visiting most of the congregations of our diocese, either in person or virtually. The idea of a New Season of Ministry does not negate or ignore the heritage of our ancestors who established our diocesan life and have championed the Way of Love for generations. What it does is signal a new chapter in our common life, a season of discernment and ministry in which we are journeying together to a future, while yet unknown is nonetheless filled with the promise of God's abiding love and presence.

Our Diocesan Convention this year will celebrate this journey under the theme of ***"Dancing Into a New Season of Ministry: Growing Community to Seed God's Mission."*** We are still planning an in-person Convention at the Radisson Hotel in Bismarck, October 8-9, 2021. The plan is to offer various workshops and trainings on Friday afternoon, enjoy a meal together Friday evening, during which I will offer some reflections on this New Season of Ministry and our common life. Saturday will feature a morning Eucharist with the theme of Reconciliation and Renewal, followed by presentations and discussion in table groups around the 2022 Diocesan Budget, the Mutual Ministry Review Matrix developed by Diocesan Council and other matters related to our common life. During lunch on Saturday, clergy and lay delegates will meet by region (East and West) for election of Diocesan Council representatives and other discussion. After lunch, the Convention will take up various matters of business, including resolutions and elections. The hope of the Planning Team is that this Convention will be a celebration of our mission and ministry along with an opportunity to build and strengthen community across the diocese, especially since it has been two years since Convention has met in person.

Mindful of the realities of the ongoing Covid-19 health crisis, Diocesan Council has approved the recommendations from our Covid Protocol Team, chaired by Dr. John Baird. You can find those on the diocesan website. In the spirit of our call to love God and one another, we ask each congregation and member of the clergy to covenant with each other to:

- a. Send only delegates, clergy, and guests who are vaccinated
- b. Discuss issues in advance among members so delegates can represent all
- c. Wear masks when in groups indoors
- d. Maintain a proper distance (3 to 6 feet) when unmasked, such as for meals
- e. Maintain safe distancing and masking for any children who are not yet vaccinated

We will livestream the bishop's remarks on Friday night, the Saturday morning Eucharist, and the Convention plenary sessions. There will not be a provision for voting online.

It is my hope that all canonically resident clergy will attend, as they are able, and that each congregation will send a full contingent of lay delegates. Registration information is on the diocesan website. I also want to encourage any guests who might want to join us for all, or part, of the Convention to register. We are offering a special Friday only registration for guests.

More information about Convention, including hotel reservations, nomination forms, the proposed 2022 budget and resolutions can be found on the diocesan website – <https://ndepiscopal.org/2021-diocesan-convention/>

Please do all you can to help make this Convention a success as we dance our way into a new season of ministry together.

Faithfully,

The Right Reverend Thomas C. Ely