



*The Episcopal Diocese of Northern Michigan
131 East Ridge Street
Marquette, Michigan 49855*

March 20, 2009

A Statement from leadership of the Diocese of Northern Michigan:

Many of you have been hearing about our recent election and about Kevin Thew Forrester, our bishop-elect. We have known, lived, and worked with Kevin in this diocese for eight years and know him to be a person of deep faith and witness to the love of God and Jesus. His deep spiritual grounding, his extensive learning, his pastoral sensitivity, and his passion for living truthfully and authentically have enriched our diocese and provided focused guidance during the years he has been among us. We are confident that Kevin will guard and defend the faith of the Church while inviting us to ever fresh expressions of that faith.

This election is about more than Kevin. It is about the diocese that we love and the decisions we have made to be increasingly faithful in our mission and ministry as the people of God, as the hands of Jesus in this place, as a people deeply rooted in baptismal ministry.

We are a diocese of twenty-seven small congregations scattered across a wide geographical area, a forested land tucked between three of the Great Lakes, a land of great natural beauty and harsh climate. Our congregations are located in small towns with declining populations and in the most economically depressed rural area of a state with one of the worst economies in the country. While we may be small in numbers, we are congregations of committed and caring Christians, people who love the Episcopal Church and remain faithful to it. Our commitment to living with vitality and vibrancy in this environment has attracted the interest and attention of a steady stream of visitors from around the Anglican Communion who have been drawn to our baptismally formed ministry and way of "being church" and who have enriched us immeasurably by their presence.

We are a people fed and renewed in the Eucharist, then sent out into the world – into our communities and workplaces, to our families, friends and to strangers – to carry out the ministry given to all of us at Baptism: to proclaim the good news, to seek and serve Christ in all persons, to strive for justice and peace among all people, respecting the dignity of every human being. We take seriously those words of the baptismal covenant and strive to live them out daily.

A sense of family on the congregational, regional, and diocesan level has allowed us to love, support, encourage and call forth leadership to sustain us through the difficult times we have faced. Through the grace of God, the love of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the power of the Holy Spirit we have emerged from the deep pain of sorrow and loss at the death of our beloved bishop, Jim Kelsey, nearly 22 months ago, into the excitement and renewed commitment represented by the election of our new bishop and the creation of the Episcopal Ministry Support Team.

We have confidence in the discernment team we called, aware of their diversity, giftedness and single minded devotion to the trust we placed in them. We believe the discernment process that we have followed has been open, thorough, faithful and canonical, with a greater degree of outside scrutiny and support than most traditional search processes. We believe it to have been a Spirit-led, prayerful process. Their work has been overwhelmingly affirmed by two conventions and by the vast majority of our people.

We are a practical, resourceful and hopeful people who look to the future with excitement and confidence as we seek to be a faithful and dynamic community of Christians, committed to bringing the light and life of Christ to the world in which we live.

Members of the Standing Committee
Members of the Commission on Ministry
Members of the Diocesan Council
Members of the Episcopal Ministry Discernment Team