

Beloved in Christ,

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I recently celebrated the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of my ordination to the diaconate. In those thirty-five years (as well as several before I was ordained) I have served God and the Church in communities and circumstances that have called for radical creativity. This is one reason I believe I was called to be Provisional Bishop of Eastern Oregon for the main task set before us is to discern and live into a future structure for the mission and ministry of our diocese. To that end, I have spent my first year with you learning about Eastern Oregon, the congregations that are EDEO, getting to know the leadership and growing in my love of all who are in this diocese.

I have learned about our history – how we have never really been self-supporting financially, and perhaps because of this – how we have always been open to new possibilities and new ways of supporting and doing ministry. I have grown in my appreciation for the human resources, the many sacrifices (holy gifts) made by the ministers (both lay and ordained) of this diocese for the building up of the Body of Christ, and for the many varieties and vast extent of ministry happening in and through our congregations. I have prayed for wisdom and guidance to find a way forward in which, I believe, we are called to work together so that ‘God’s kingdom will come and God’s will be done on earth as in heaven.’

Now is the time to take the next step. What possible futures are before us? How can we best continue our work in and for the Kingdom of God? What support do we need to give one another so that we can proclaim by word and deed the Good News of God in Christ? How will we be the Episcopal Church in Eastern Oregon?

A next step in this process has been completed recently. Members of the Diocesan Council have visited every congregation and reflected, with you, on ministry: how we are doing it, who we partner with and what support would make it more effective? We have learned (once again) that good ministry isn’t related to size or financial resources, it’s related to faith, hope, love and our willingness to offer what we have. We have seen the miracles that you are doing.

Now is the time to look at these many resources and to be creative. What structures, what systems need to be in place to support and uphold that ministry? Can we find new partners that will be mutually transformed by a shared mission? What is essential to be an Episcopal diocese? Can we go it alone with a skeleton staff? Should we? Would our lives and the life of the Church be enhanced by sending us out into the broader church to be leaven for the Episcopal Church as a whole? How can we be good stewards of the many gifts that we have: Gifts of people, places, buildings, financial resources given by our forebears, and given week by week by us? Why do we and how should we gather together as a diocese? These are the questions we will need to be answering as we prepare for our future.

This work is not ours alone. We may be the ones focused on it now, but there are other dioceses that are also wrestling with these questions, and there will be more in the future. Most are asking similar questions and we will be in conversation with many of them.

To that end, the Diocesan Council has created a Task Force on Futures. Their ‘charter’ is on the website at [www.episdioeo.org/futures\\_Committee.html](http://www.episdioeo.org/futures_Committee.html) but suffice it to say the task is to consider the many

possibilities that lie before us and bring to Diocesan Convention two or three possible future structures with recommendations for implementing them. (If this cannot be completed before 1 October, the recommendations will be brought to Diocesan Council, which will set a date for a special convention if needed.) They will also look for new funding resources and ways to reduce expenses for operations.

They have begun their work, but they would appreciate hearing your comments and concerns. On the webpage above, there is a link to a weblog – where you can offer your suggestions, hopes, dreams and concerns. You can also send them to members of the committee.

The Rev. Chuck Christopher (Convenor), Doug Harder (Redeemer, Pendleton), Amy Martinez (St Paul's, Nyssa), the Rev. Ted Rodrigues (Transfiguration, Sisters), Marjorie Thelen (St Andrew's/Peace Lutheran, Burns), Bob Thomson (St Mark's, Hood River), Jerry Frazier (Diocesan Treasurer) and I make up the Task Force at the moment. Others may join us later.

Please (and this is hugely important) keep us in your prayers – that we will know God's Grace among us and seek only God's call.

And may the Grace of God pour upon you and give you peace as we walk this new road together.

Bendición,  
Bavi Edna "Nedi" Rivera