



*To be read to your congregation on Pentecost
May 27, 2007, or the following Sunday*

The Day of Pentecost, 2007

The disciples had little idea what to expect as they obeyed Jesus and waited in the upper room for His promised gift of the Spirit. “You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth.” What happened on the first Day of Pentecost continues to transform the world, as Christian communities are empowered by the Holy Spirit down the generations to both be witnesses to Christ’s forgiving death and His liberating resurrection, and to be servants of His incarnate Love as we fulfill His call to be seekers of justice and peace.

In Iowa we are not exempt from the call, nor are we exceptions to the promised gift of the Holy Spirit. But what to do, and where to begin? And how can we generally do things as one Church in Many Locations?

Since convention 2005, a Task Force of the Board has been asking, and listening to your sense of the Spirit’s leading, and we collected your information about ministry needs and priorities. You made specific comments, which were reviewed directly. So today, I am delighted to send you as a way of response, the first Strategic Plan since my time as your Bishop. It is to be used as a guide and planning tool for every level of ministry participation to help guide us through the years 2008 through 2012.

There are four overarching Ministry areas – which reflect what many see as the key places for our ministry energy, both together and as individual communities of faith. They are: **Strengthening Congregations** – the healthy hearts of God’s Mission in Iowa; **Building the Next Generations of Faith** – the intentional invitation to all to become people of faith and service; **Affirming Episcopal/Anglican identity** – the understanding that our tradition has unique ways of expressing and doing God’s Love in Jesus Christ; and finally **Shared Ministries** – the acknowledgement that as the Body of Christ, our ministry is mutual and interdependent and God works best through us all in concert, sharing our resources.

The “plan” is not a how-to directional guide. It is a compendium of possibilities arranged around the four major ministry areas. The key part, from my viewpoint, is the Worksheet entitled “Strategic Discernment” and the accompanying step-by-step guide. It is on this worksheet that we invite you at every level of ministry to write out your own goals, plans of engagement and measurements for success. These levels of ministry may include an entire congregation, a vestry or Diocesan Commission or Bible study group, a Choir, Finance Committee, or Diocesan Ministry Development Team -- whatever your configuration, no group large or small is exempt from this possibility.

(over)

The strategy is to be doing this collectively across the Diocese in our own time and pace, as the Spirit leads. The four major ministry areas will act as guide and guard rails. Each of the next Conventions (2009-2012) will be thematically focused on one of the four areas, starting in 2008 with a concentration on our overall dedication to Christ and Christ's Mission. At my annual visitations, I hope your engagement with the Plan will be a major part of our conversations together.

On the Day of Pentecost, Jesus put His Church in motion to be in mission with Him through each and all. We are the recipients of the faithful dedication of generations that have come before us who have built us into a generation of faith. The Church's voice and mission energy is needed today like no other. We are privileged to live in the best and the worst of times. We see the whole world laid out before us in great details through our electronically created global communication. God will not accept that we did not know the conditions of things as we are asked how did we express our gratitude for God's love and obey the command to love as we have been loved. This is a call to carry out that command as One Church in Many Locations as the Episcopal Diocese of Iowa.

Alan Scarfe, Bishop of Iowa
May 27, 2007