

Friday, July 23, 2010

Dear People of Grace,

At its regular meeting earlier this week, we asked the Vestry of Grace Church to consider an idea that may be an important forward step for our future as a body of Christ in Plainfield. After spending most of the meeting carefully deliberating our proposal, the Vestry voted to move forward on a process that will analyze, investigate and discern the feasibility of a potential consolidation of Grace Church, Plainfield and the Church of the Holy Cross, North Plainfield.

In the first of a three-phase process, three members of Grace Church as well as three members of the Church of the Holy Cross will form Discernment Teams responsible for a 12- to-18-month in-depth investigation of six specific tasks. Their findings for each task will be reported to their respective Vestries and congregations. At the end of Phase One, the Discernment Teams will recommend whether or not to continue to move toward a consolidation. At that point, the Vestry will either accept their recommendation or reject it. Along the way, our congregation and leadership will have many opportunities for conversations about worries, fears and concerns. **The first opportunity will be a Grace Church Town Hall meeting on September 12 after our 10:30 a.m. service. We hope you come!**

If the decision is made not to consolidate, the process will end. If the Vestry decides to continue after Phase One, a new team will be convened to plan joint activities to allow members of the two congregations to get to know each other and to create a detailed plan for the best use of the assets of both parishes. Phase Two is expected to last one year.

Like Phase One, if Phase Two successfully concludes, then, the rectors, wardens and vestries will be responsible for Phase Three, which will involve implementation of the consolidation according to the Phase Two recommendations and the New Jersey statutes for consolidation. Phase Three will take six months.

We thank the Discernment Team members who have agreed to commit themselves to this important work that explores our future: Trevor King, Timothy Mann and Karen Moore. Over the coming year-and-a-half they will be busy analyzing factors that could make our congregation a stronger community that more effectively serves Christ in the Greater Plainfield Area. The Discernment Team will communicate with you and the Vestry on a regular basis.

You are an important member of our body of Christ at Grace Church. We have a strong commitment to our work and worship here for the love of Christ. At same time, we are aware that financial challenges are holding us back. At this point, we are considering our future from a position of relative strength – firmly aware of the potential for renewal – not from the position of weakened spirit and resources. That is why now is the time to make a step forward.

Please include our mission in your prayers and ask God to guide us all into God's path for our future as Christ's disciples.

Yours faithfully,

Rev. Carolyn H. Eklund, rector

Mr. Jason Algeo, warden

Mr. Frank Walcott, warden