

# Statement from the Exodus Convocation

## Convocation summary

The Exodus Convocation held September 16, 2017 at the Procter Center was a lively and inspiring event, attended by over 300 lay members and clergy of the Diocese of Southern Ohio. Over the eight hours of fellowship and discussion, loosely based on the journey of the Israelite people from bondage to freedom as chronicled in the book of Exodus, the discussions focused on several overarching concepts that emerged, to provide further conversation and direction for the future of the diocese and its congregations.

A strong calling was expressed by many in attendance, and in many different ways, for the diocese to explore new ways of functioning and to seek a broader and deeper communion among its members, congregations, the bishop, the bishop's staff and our communities and neighbors. In order to grow spiritually, many lay members and clergy voiced the need for the diocese to be willing to risk making changes in service to one another and the world in which we live. Fears of change, insecurity and vulnerability need to be recognized and worked through as we seek to be God's people in and for an ever-changing world.

1. Repeatedly, the need for stronger bonds of community within and outside the church were voiced. A desire for more meaningful relationships and involvement in serving the needs of others in the model of Jesus was a recurring aspect in most conversations.
2. Members attending the Convocation felt we are in bondage to buildings, budgets, structure and custom, and that we need to re-think our ways of defining, reporting and measuring our success as congregations. Again and again, we urge ourselves to open our doors and buildings to the community. We have set expectations to get out of the pews and go into the world about us and learn to listen to one another more deeply. We have been encouraged to express our needs, fears and hopes for the future. In short, "Put feet to the Gospel".
3. Visions of 'the Promised Land' were different for different people, but in each case, it involved trust, respect, love, compassion and service. The Promised Land is not as much a "social worker's paradise," as a place of spiritual transformation. It may not be so much a place of arriving but the journey itself, and a way of "being".

## Direction Statement for the Future

God is with us as we recognize that change is our only constant while we listen to one another, honoring each other and welcoming God's children wherever we meet them:

### 1. Mini Exodus Convocations

Each congregation is urged to hold a local a version of the Exodus Convocation for their members during Lent or the season after Pentecost. Congregations of fewer than one hundred members could join with nearby congregations. They could select a Saturday or two adjacent evenings, to explore the questions and concepts begun this past September.

The bishop's office could provide resource materials, and if requested, a facilitator to help plan the convocation with local congregational leaders.

## **2. Listening Lessons**

Each congregation should hold sessions in learning to listen to one another and how to have productive conversations. Congregations are urged to organize small groups (across generations) to explore topics of interest about the church and the world, in which they can practice listening and conversing productively.

## **3. Being Good Neighbors**

Each congregation is urged to examine its involvement in mission, outreach, and in the community, and to see how it might improve or broaden its impact in its neighborhood. The dozens of projects on display at the September Exodus Convocation provided ideas and models. We urge one another to discover our best model, not so much to do "more", but to do what is needed, and to enhance community and relationship.

## **4. Assessment for the 21st Century**

The Diocesan Council should appoint a group, representing the entire diocese, to research canonical requirements and policies to determine if there are more meaningful ways to assess our success as congregations and as a diocese. An examination of reports, metrics and goals, in light of a changing church, might well be in order, and could prove helpful as congregations set their goals and priorities for transforming ourselves and for our work in the world. This transformation should include discovering new ways to improve communication between congregations and among individuals, as well as with diocesan leadership.

Task Force members:

Jon Boss  
Jim Murray  
Jim Heathcote  
Karen Peeler  
The Rev. Canon Jack Koepke  
The Rev. Joseph Kovitch  
Janice West  
Katrina Mundy, Group Convener