



EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF THE GREAT LAKES

being & becoming: **organizing principle**

the rev. molly bosscher, standing committee president:

Greetings, Episcopal Diocese of the Great Lakes. I'm the Reverend Molly Bosscher and I am our Standing Committee president and I serve St. Andrews in Grand Rapids, Michigan. And I am here today with Alicia and I'll let her introduce herself.

the rev. alicia hager, diocesan council vice chair:

Hey everybody, I am Alicia Hager. I'm the rector of Emmanuel Episcopal Church in Hastings, Michigan, right between Grand Rapids and Lansing, and I am also the vice chair of our Diocesan Council. Thanks for having me today, Molly.

molly

We are very excited because we are going to talk to you today about our organizing principle. And - I know it's very exciting actually! I know who would know that I would get this excited about an organizing principle, but I am. So usually what we do with a mission and vision statement is it helps us kind of understand like where in the body we are, and it helps us understand what we are supposed to be doing as our part of the body of Christ.

And usually when you're doing a mission and vision statement, a bishop leads you in that process. Like that is one of the first things that we would hope that the first bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of the Great Lakes does with us, but we don't have a bishop. And so we need a common call in this meanwhile. We need something that we can kind of come around that can help us live into our baptismal covenant. And what are we doing in this diocese right now? Because we do not need to just tread water until we can call the person who can be our first bishop.

alicia

You are absolutely right, Molly. And I know that on Diocesan Council, as we've worked to kind of envision and create longer range plans for the fiscal future of the diocese, we have longed for something to guide our thinking and something to measure up against all of the time. "Is this who we are? Is this who we say we are?" And so I'm really excited that we are coming together around our shared commitments as Christians and

we are loving God and loving our neighbors as ourselves because those are in our baptismal covenant, right? They're who we say we are. So our love of God and our vows as baptized people are what we are going to rally around, recognizing that that is a really big call. Loving God and loving our neighbors also, it looks different across different times and different spaces.

There's not a single person or parish or diocese that will fully encompass the love of God in their time and space. But we are working to draw on Paul's metaphor of the body of Christ. All of these different parts and functions functioning as one body.

molly

So how do you get an organizing principle? Ha! I can tell you. What we did is we commissioned a group of lay and clergy leaders, people who had already expressed interest in being part of this kind of work, people who find mission and vision statements interesting and who wanted to help us with it. And I happened to have heard that this work was really fun, that people who served on this committee loved it and they said it was really energizing and that's exactly the kind of place and time and work that we want to do in the Episcopal Diocese of the Great Lakes. And it was led by our interim executive officer, the Reverend Alan James. And now Alicia is going to unveil the principle.

alicia

Oh! Drum roll please. Here it is. **"We are called to embody the love of Jesus Christ with grace, hope and joy. We live out this calling by collaborating creatively to nurture deep and lifelong spiritual growth, build up vibrant and inclusive worshiping communities, respond compassionately to the needs of our neighbors, and honor and care for creation."**

molly

Isn't that beautiful? And really we love this statement because it really describes where we are already and gives us a little to stretch to that deep and lifelong spiritual growth. That's one of the hallmarks of this diocese as well as our vibrant and inclusive worshiping communities. And one of the things that so many of the churches in this diocese already do is respond compassionately to the needs of our neighbors, whether it is through diaper ministries or through feeding ministries or through IHN or all of the different ways that our Episcopal churches in this diocese work to respond to the needs of our neighbors. And as you know, creation is very important for us with the lakes all around, with the rivers, we care about God's earth.

alicia

Absolutely, and I'm so grateful that this helps us to discern what living as disciples of Jesus Christ looks like in this time and space. in the still relatively newly formed diocese of the Great Lakes, because as Episcopalians, we have shared commitments around loving God and neighbor, like we said, and this principle helps us really to tell what that looks like now as our elected lay and clergy leaders are seeking to make decisions for the good of the diocese.

molly

One of the things you may say is that it's a little long. Well, yes, it's a little long, but that opening statement, **"We are called to embody the love of Jesus Christ with grace, hope and joy,"** that's kind of, is the, that's the nexus of this. And we think that it brings clarity, not only to our shared diocesan work, but to say my own journey of faith and transformation, and maybe even your own journey of faith and transformation.

alicia

Yeah, it's really beautiful.

molly

The last thing that I want to say is that this has been approved by both standing committee and, Alicia?

alicia

Diocesan Council!

molly

So we really want to know your feedback on this. We want to know what you all think. And if you like it, please let us know, too. We are grateful for your time today and so many blessings on all y'all. Have a good one.