A New Way of Being

“The Fresh Expression movement helps existing churches decide against helplessness in the face of change. It’s about congregations with a great history deciding to have a great future of kingdom investment.”


It will be good to welcome many of you to our diocesan convention in Gillette, Wyoming over the first weekend of October. We chose to have our convention in Gillette because the newest church in the diocese is ready to be shown off! By the grace of God, through generous donations of their members, with the help of our foundation and because of the long-held vision by the members, Holy Trinity Church in Gillette is happily in their new building. We will have services there on Friday evening, giving everyone who attends an opportunity to experience the good work they have done. The congregation has been worshiping in Gillette since 1912 but they recently moved into their new building, one that more adequately meets their needs and strategically places them in blossoming neighborhoods.

The theme of this year’s convention is centered around, “Fresh Expressions of Church.” I think we are at a critical moment in the life of the Diocese of Wyoming. For years, even decades, we have been watching the aging of our congregations. We have attempted several ways to address these concerns as well as the continuing survival of our rural congregations. Bishop Jones first initiated the work of volunteer "Canon Nine" clergy. Bishop Caldwell took the diocese into a much deeper relationship with what we know as, “mutual or shared ministry.” We have continued to address this model in ever evolving ways, most recently by equipping our clergy through their participation in the Iona Collaborative. We have been able to stabilize most of our congregations though we are still seeing congregations in many places with fewer and fewer younger participants. There are some exceptions but the trend remains. Fresh Expressions in the United States and United Kingdom is reversing this disturbing trend and that fact is a source of hope for us.

Fresh Expressions of Church invites us to a new way of being. It invites us to not just open our doors in the most welcoming way we know how but to go out of our doors and introduce people to a relationship with the living God. It is not a church growth program. It is rather a response to our Lord’s great commission – to go out and make disciples. At this year’s convention we will explore more deeply what it means for us to engage Fresh Expressions of Church. We will explore ideas, have times of reflection and work at becoming more open to the movement, presence and invitation of the Holy Spirit. God loves this church of ours and it’s my belief that God wants us to carry on for generations to come and I believe this is one of those moments when God is giving us a way forward. Thanks be to God and may each of you experience a fresh expression of God’s grace and love for you today.

+John