

1. As you read our diocesan profile, what most excites and challenges you about the possibility of serving as Bishop of the Diocese of San Diego?

The energy, faithfulness, and diversity of the Diocese of San Diego excites my passion for ministry with and among the people of this broad and diverse diocese and poses challenges that hold the potential to re-energize the church, deepen its faithfulness, and expand its embrace of the broader community of God's people.

Energy. The profile highlights the reality that the Diocese of San Diego is "a transformational diocese of high vitality" in which "the majority are both energized by and find satisfaction in their work in the diocese's mission." That energy radiates from pages and pictures of the profile and from the congregations, the unique ministries they support individually and together, and the quest for greater health and vigor to which the profile attests. Energy is contagious and can enliven and transform communities of faith, even those facing perhaps the greatest challenges, and energy breeds energy, offering the potential to sustain the next initiative...and the one after that.

Faithfulness. Having experienced the faithfulness of the people of the diocese through interaction with members of numerous congregations, I am heartened – and not surprised – to sense it palpably in the paragraphs of the profile. Our shared devotion to God and commitment to live lives of faith that express to all the love of Jesus is central to our identity. Without it, being "a missionary community that dares to follow Jesus Christ in his life of fearless love for the world" would be impossible. With it, all things are possible. Yet sometimes Jesus's footprints vanish from our sight, leaving us instead to discern the direction we are being challenged to move in faith, and it is precisely then that we may have the greatest potential to grow in faith.

Diversity. A healthy diocese in a region spanning three counties, two states, and one of the most diverse cities in the nation would be expected to mirror the breadth of the populace, seizing the extraordinary opportunity to embrace the full reach of the body of Christ. Yet with candor the profile acknowledges that the diocese is "diverse and strives to be inclusive," recognizing that true inclusiveness poses its own unique challenges, not only theologically, politically, and economically, but also ethnically and racially, across ages and genders, and encompassing the identities and economies of our day as they evolve. When we "relentlessly search for others to befriend, know and invite," we live into the promised potential of the body of believers and are renewed in faith as we listen to and strive to incorporate the "other."

Calling. Sensing a deep call to represent Christ and the Church in San Diego as "apostle, chief priest, and pastor of the diocese," I am exhilarated by the prospect of leading a church imbued with energy and faithfulness in a region rich in diversity at a time when the faith and unity of the church will be tested, its character challenged, and its capacity to bring Christ's love and reconciliation to people desperately in need of both brought to light.

2. Tell us about a personal experience of cultural challenge and/or reconciliation. How did it affect you?

Having experienced cultural challenges in many settings including work with Hispanics, Haitians, and Poles in South Chicago, an African American congregation in Kansas City, fervent believers at a politically-isolated multi-faith religious enclave in the United Arab Emirates, battered women in Malta, destitute group home residents in Italy, physically disabled Bahrani athletes, terrified women and children taking refuge in a clandestine Dubai shelter, and multiple nations' armed forces worshiping together in far-flung and dangerous places, I will focus here on my cross-cultural experience working with mentally ill homeless people in Cincinnati while living with Franciscans in their neighborhood. Large-scale deinstitutionalization of mentally ill persons had begun several years before, and the population struggling to survive on the streets of Cincinnati's Over-the-Rhine neighborhood was growing. After several were murdered in abandoned inner city buildings in our neighborhood, friars and local leaders organized the Tender Mercies project to construct housing for homeless mentally ill adults, providing security, dignity, and community in a place they could call home. (<https://www.tendermerciesinc.org>)

Employing an innovative approach promising enduring results, we obtained long-term, low-cost leases on abandoned tenement buildings near Washington Park, solicited businesses to donate materials for rehabbing, and recruited skilled carpenters and volunteers to renovate first one, then two, three, and four buildings to create residences in which the homeless men and women in the neighborhood could find permanent refuge from harsh life on the streets. While on the staff, I engaged directly in one-on-one involvement with the men and women who lived there, assisting them in getting a used pair of shoes or jeans if their old ones wore out, accompanying them as they attempted to navigate the social services system to obtain health care and necessary sustenance, walking the streets with them (once even getting tossed out of the public library on a bitter winter morning when we went in to warm ourselves), listening to their stories (some brutal, some comical, all tragic) and breaking their sense of isolation and abandonment, playing bumper pool with them for hours on end, and standing with them when their psychological afflictions altered their realities and stole their ability to function. I sought to be one-with-them even though I was not one of them, and our mutual respect and affection grew across the chasm that separates the mentally ill from the rest of society.

The work was exceptionally gratifying but consistently challenging because of their struggle with recurrent lapses of judgment, lapses in taking their medication, and lapses in the network of services designed to support them. The Tender Mercies organization and my fellow staff members taught me the importance of creative thinking, risk-taking, and innovation to achieve worthwhile ends and connect across barriers, particularly when addressing the concerns of people within a different culture, and the residents taught me the importance of listening, the value of building trust, and the power of entering sustained relationships. I also learned that God's tender mercies can take your breath away!

3. In a time when some see the church in decline, how do you plan to help the church flourish in the 21st century?

The words of Charles Dickens echo in my ears as I write: “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us.” (A Tale of Two Cities) Timeless words - yet the present and future of the church hold great promise, if together we employ wisdom, remain firm in faith, seek the Light, and hold fast to hope!

Beyond being a body of believers the church is an organization, and organizations like living organisms naturally undergo life cycle phases: birth, growth, decline, renewal (or absent renewal, death). These phases are inherent in the life of every organization and need not be feared but must be understood to retain or recapture vitality and vigor. Cognizant that our church like any living organism passes through phases in its development, we can alleviate fear and be emboldened to lean into our place in the progression and seize its potential. Effective leadership allays fear, imparts confidence, breeds hope, and ignites the process of renewal.

To recognize and appreciate where we are in the cycle as congregations, as a diocese, and as part of the larger church, education is imperative: drawing on resources developed by the Alban Institute at Duke, Episcopal Church Foundation, and others, workshops led by subject matter experts, and scholarly, research-based studies. So is discernment: employing self-assessment tools, facilitated visioning, and persistent prayer. Then comes the crucial task of goal-setting, establishing specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-honed goals that, inspired by God, inspire us to devote our shared energies and passion to their accomplishment.

Undergirding this process is effective leadership that trusts the leading of the Spirit and the capabilities and commitment of the people. Too often, leadership failures (inexperience, poor planning, failure to change, or faltering) contribute to organizational decline, but leadership that equips and empowers people and propels positive change has the opposite effect. To this task I bring significant experience guiding organizations through transitional processes, seizing opportunities for renewal. Through that experience, I’ve learned the importance of a transformational mindset which respects the strengths and values on which an organization has been built but probes the parameters and presses perceived limits.

Canadian pastor Carey Nieuwhof cites traits of churches that will impact the future: flexibility, willingness to change, outsider focus, nimble decision-making, innovation, valuing online relationships as real relationships, willingness to experiment, and the like. These traits share a common thread: a willingness to be transformed in order to offer to

others the transforming power of the love of Christ. Then we can proceed “undeterred by borders or barriers” deep into the 21st century and assure that the church will flourish. We have everything before us!

4. How does your ministry proclaim hope?

We live in a world aching for hope. Unsettling headlines, disconcerting sound bites, and disquieting electronic messages rattle nerves repeatedly. Then there is day-to-day life itself and the aspirations and heartaches it holds. We pray for quiet confidence. We reach for hope.

None more so than Jesus himself impart hope - our model, our inspiration, and our guide! Trusting him, following him, mirroring him as best we're able, we are bearers of hope proclaiming with confidence that God is with us, not by words alone but by our very presence and demeanor! This is the foundation of my ministry, my answer to the call to be Christ to one another. Hope is more than a sentiment or wish. True hope is confident expectancy that the One in whom we place our trust, the Source of all that we have and all that we are, is always at our side, accompanying us through all that comes, our Savior, our Life, our Hope!

Ironically, as I began to write this reflection a person I hadn't heard from for months reached out to reconnect. Our first encounter, in their workplace, led to a sequence of conversations over several months. At first they seemed reticent but eventually disclosed the horror of being sexually assaulted at two consecutive workplaces. As our conversations continued, I began to suspect that underneath the pain lay an experience of child abuse, but I waited patiently, allowing time for what needed to come out to surface, hopeful that it would. It did. As their spirit spiraled into despair, hope itself seemed to flee, and yet there were moments when it glimmered like a candle flame that would not be extinguished: when cathartic disclosure led to a sense of relief, when quiet conversation led to a stillness reverently shared, when words of prayer reached toward the One with whom they had lost touch, when an unexpected visit to church coincided with a sermon I preached on hope, when an evening meal ended with the revelation that they were planning suicide, and when the trust we had built emboldened them to accompany me to the hospital to seek therapeutic help. Moments of grace, moments of hope. As we re-engaged, I sensed that hope had been reborn and the promise of life renewed. They recalled the worship service that morning many months before, the message I preached, and the experience of receiving communion that day for the very first time. Revisiting their experience of church years before, they reconnected past, present, and future, expressing renewed hope for better days ahead - and for the restoration of faith in the One whose presence abides.

The Scriptures assure us that “faith, hope, and love abide.” In my life and ministry, I seek to impart that confidence: preaching hope, speaking of hope, praying with hope, living a

message of hope, bearing that hope to all. With confident expectancy, we have more to hope for than we could ask or imagine!