

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?

In reading your diocesan profile, I truly appreciated these words: “We are not describing the desired qualities of our next bishop. Rather, we describe our diocese: who we have been, who we are, and who we hope to be ... we hope that you will listen deeply to us...” What a powerful challenge to all who are considering the possibility of serving: “to listen deeply to the still small voice of God.”

Your profile is abounding with images of rich historical beginnings, a dynamic presence today, and wonderful dreams and visions for the future. I see the Diocese of San Diego as a diocese that is rich in mission and vision; servants and resources; programs and ministries; diversity and dreams; and this is exciting to me as I consider the possibility of serving as your next bishop.

I’m intrigued by your ministry of reconciliation that has marked the Church’s common life for over four decades and by your willingness to welcome change (not always a high priority for churches or dioceses in transition). This is certainly becoming increasingly more significant and necessary as we strive to effectively live out the Great Commandment and Great Commission in the twenty-first century.

Clergy and laity have often discovered that merely mentioning the word change can cause great concern. Mark Twain said: “No one likes change except perhaps a wet baby.” Humorous but certainly true. The fact that you are open to welcome “needed change” is quite exciting as I believe God has gifted me to serve as a catalyst-type leader: One who transforms the process and serves as an agent of necessary and intentional change that empowers the Church to move forward into action for growth.

Perhaps the greatest challenge facing the Church today is the growing secularism and diminishing role of mainline denominations. This may suggest that what we have always done may no longer be working, and that we must together find new and relevant ways to reach the world with the message of Christ’s love, while also upholding and strengthening our traditional practices.

Your mission and vision, and goals and dreams for the future are powerful portrayals of a diocese living out the Good News of the Gospel in word and action: Daring to follow Jesus Christ in fearless love and befriending the lost, needy, wayward, and disenfranchised – inviting all to experience reconciliation and God’s love for all.

These statements of faith, purpose, vision, and compassionate caring are in fact, what has drawn me to consider the possibility of serving as bishop. I am excited about the possibilities of ministering together with all of you – a people who genuinely cares for all.

It has been said, “No one cares how much you know – until they know how much you care.” This is wise counsel to consider – as our Lord’s mandate to the Church has always been: “Respond to human need by loving service, disclosing God’s reign through humble ministry to those most needy” (Anglican Communion Covenant, 5).

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

In one of my earlier ministry assignments as parish priest, I encountered grave issues and deep social challenges as related to the church’s stance in terms of “who is welcome” and “where to draw the line in terms of being inclusive?” Most of these parishioners had adopted a strong-willed position identifying themselves as “anti-inclusive.”

Much of their belief system was rooted in an ultra-conservative ideology that prevented them from relating to God who truly loves all people. They claimed to know and love God but somewhere on their journey of faith – they became stuck. It became increasingly more difficult for them to relate to a church that embodied this loving theology for all people.

And so, much of what was unfolding in the life of The Episcopal Church drove these individuals to the conclusion that God and/or the Church – was wrong. And yet, in my closest encounters with these people, I could tell they were good people, people who cared deeply about a great many things, who gave of themselves, who went above and beyond to help those in distress.

Over the course of time, in the preaching and teaching moments, I endeavored to inspire with messages of hope, healing, reconciliation, selfless service, and sacrificial love. To touch their hearts and minds with the Good News of God’s love for all persons. To reflect on the Church’s gifts of diversity and what it means to befriend the stranger ... to be welcoming and inclusive. The results of these interactions proved (over time) life-changing. Hearts eventually melted, and opinions slowly changed, and the certainty of God’s love for all began to shape the future of this small parish.

St. Benedict envisioned: “All guests who present themselves are to be welcomed as Christ himself.” St. Benedict was right. As one Episcopal Church advertises, “The church isn’t a private club for the chosen few; rather, our doors and our hearts are open for everyone and to everyone. We hope to welcome each person who comes our way as we would welcome Jesus, for God often comes under the appearance of a stranger.”

I believe this is the message the Episcopal Church endeavors to convey in the 21st century: “The Episcopal Church Welcoming All!” This message is warm and hospitable – “We graciously welcome and accept “one and all” regardless of age, race, culture, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, political and/or theological position.”

I advocate such a philosophy and believe that our “ministry of inclusiveness” is one of the great strengths of The Episcopal Church. After all: “Our faith community is an eclectic mix of people with differing backgrounds and perspectives, united together in a common love of God and love for our neighbors.” Such inclusiveness is critical to our understanding and practice of the Great Commandment – “how we demonstrate love for God is revealed in how we demonstrate love for others.”

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

It is certainly no secret why many church growth experts see the Church in decline. Thom Rainer, in his study of growing healthy churches says: “It could be because the church has ceased to be relevant in the 21st century.” He adds, “When churches become conflict-ridden and split over trivial issues, it’s easy to understand why outsiders have given up on the church as being influential in their lives.”

In this context, you ask: “How do I plan to help the church flourish in the 21st century? Certainly, a thought-provoking question.

In all facets of pastoral ministry, I strive to preach, teach, and lead by example and in ways that enable the church to experience renewal, health and dynamic growth; causing the church to flourish and move forward even in challenging times.

It’s exciting to see that through the clergy and laity of this diocese – you are confidently bringing about renewal, reform, reconciliation, and resurgence – enabling the Church to flourish in a time when the modern-day church is declining.

Your many efforts to befriend, to know, to invite, and to care for others is inspiring as evidenced in your support to refugees in churches and in your commitment to provide spiritual and material support to undocumented immigrants.

Authentic mission, vision, caring and compassion is evident through Episcopal Community Services, School for Ministry, RefugeeNet, and Youth Collaborative. I also see caring and compassion in your initiatives to equip congregational leaders with strategies to reach new members and your willingness to take a role with congregations that are struggling. It’s also critical that we invest in our youth, that we listen deeply; and as bishop, to develop a personal relationship, inspiring them to selfless service

I am honored and blessed to serve in any parish and diocese that is diverse and inclusive; that strives to include all voices in decisions; that respects the differences of others and affirms the diversity of gender expression and sexual identity; and that is willing to stand with those made vulnerable by society. Your diocese is doing this in new and life-changing ways.

Your mission and vision statements resonate with a world crying out for hope and healing; peace and justice. These statements are not merely words – they are dynamic actions being lived out in the lives of your clergy and laity partnering together in ministry and mission to share the Good News of God reconciling the world to Himself - and this my brothers and sisters is what calls me to serve.

I believe the Episcopal Diocese of San Diego is a living and breathing expression of Henry David Thoreau's words: "Live your beliefs and you can turn the world around."

As a community of faith, you are living out your beliefs and in so doing – you are changing the world. I clearly see the expressions and results of your care and concern as realized in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church; and demonstrated in worshipping the one true God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

4. How does your ministry proclaim hope?

I believe the world is hungry for a Church that will proclaim a message of hope: An enduring hope that doesn't fade away when life is cruel. Samuel Johnson says: The natural flights of the human spirit are not from pleasure to pleasure, but from hope to hope.

Those who know me best see me as a positive, encouraging, caring, and compassionate leader – as one who lovingly proclaims this "message" when all hope seems lost.

Our Gospel is a message of hope: Hope in the resurrection of Christ. Thornton Wilder offers this image: Hope is the projection of the human spirit. In response to hope the human spirit is aroused to picture every possible issue, to try every door (whether open or closed), to fit together even the most difficult pieces of the puzzle of one's life.

As Bishop, I will continue to do everything in my power to ensure that the Episcopal Church is a safe, open and welcoming place for anyone who is a seeker after Jesus Christ. We have a voice to contribute to the Church. We have a story, and a perspective the Church needs to hear. I am claiming my place in this Church and committing myself to the fullness of what God would have us be.

I envision a Church that can transcend human disagreement to respond to a world crying out for compassion, mercy and peace. I hope for the Church that is willing to be honest about its own brokenness and sin; whose people will bring their brokenness to bear on caring for all people and loving them into repentance, change and transformation. I envision the Church that cannot conceive of a place or a set of life circumstances in which there is no hope or where God cannot work.

I want to proclaim a message of hope to a Church that will reach out and shout out with sure and certain hope of the resurrection to all who will listen: If you are lost—if you are ashamed or traumatized or depressed near despair—if you have wrecked your life with

addictions or bad choices—if you feel alone and only seem to be able to hurt and alienate people—DO NOT LOSE HEART!

The arms of our Lord are open: "Come to me all you who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens: I will give you rest; you will find rest for your soul."

We as a Church can proclaim this message of hope to the world—we are proclaiming it! We are fragile and fallible messengers and disciples bearing an incorruptible truth: God is in Christ Jesus reconciling the world to himself. And no one can carry the gospel message to this broken and confused world exactly like you and I can from this place; at this time.

Dear friends, we have a call—it is a call to glory. Let us help each other answer that call with all that we are and all that we hope to be.