



Letter from Mary Gray-Reeves

Dear Friends,

May the peace and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

I have been privileged to work with your Standing Committee these past months, with the permission and support of Bishop Howard, to help find ways to facilitate listening and communication in the diocese during this challenging time of transition. Based on the perception of the Standing Committee that the Diocese of Florida was experiencing a challenging time that included conflict (depending on one's perspective) around the two episcopal elections and related matters, the Standing Committee and Bishop recognized that the duration of the consent process could be used to discern how healing might be facilitated as the diocese lives into its future.

In April and May a small design team that included the Rev. Joe Gibbes (representing the Standing Committee), Ms. Lenora Gregory (representing the Diocesan Council), Canons Allison DeFoor and Eddie Jones and The Rev. Charlie Holt (representing Diocese Staff), and me, designed and completed listening sessions with the Standing Committee, Diocesan Council, and diocesan staff. These leaders represented staff and the two primary decision-making bodies of the diocese who will have canonical oversight of the diocese following Bishop Howard's retirement.

Since that time, our small but productive working group has shifted, with Joe Gibbes taking sabbatical, Lenora Gregory preparing to roll off of Diocesan Council and Allison DeFoor and Charlie Holt taking on new ministries. The Standing Committee, as a whole, and I continue to work together to widen the listening opportunities in the diocese.

As Bishop Howard moves toward retirement, he has again authorized the Standing Committee and me to work together to listen in the diocese, via letters in the form of confidential emails. Letters may be submitted by anyone in the Diocese of Florida. Information, perceptions, thoughts, feelings, ideas

and stories can be expressed and will be held in confidence by me. These may be emailed to mgrayreeves@gmail.com.

The period for submissions will be one month, from September 20th until October 20th. Following receipt of emails during this one month period, I will generate a confidential report to the Standing Committee. The report will synthesize the content of letters, reflecting major trends of strengths, areas of improvement and growth, sentiments, and perspectives from around the diocese.

This report would not disclose any individual writer's identity, with the original emails deleted after the submission of the report to the Standing Committee. The content of the report will be focused on the data received in the letters. At the Standing Committee's request, I can include in the report suggestions about how to facilitate communication and conflict resolution in the diocese. The Standing Committee would have 'ownership' of the report and may or may not choose to share it more widely.

It is important to note, that as a clergy person I am a mandatory reporter of any abuse involving a minor, or of anything I perceive to be in violation of our Episcopal Church canons.

Canonically, the Standing Committee will be the Ecclesiastical Authority following the official retirement of Bishop Howard. At that time, the report will have been delivered to the Standing Committee, and they will make further determination about using my consulting services. If invited by the Standing Committee, I will walk with you through this season of growth and transition in a consulting capacity, assisting the Standing Committee as directed. Please know of my constant prayers for you and my desire to assist you in any way that God wills.

With blessings of grace and peace,

+Mary Gray-Reeves
Consultant