



# DIOCESE OF MAINE

LORING HOUSE

143 STATE STREET, PORTLAND, MAINE 04101-3799

TEL. 207 772-1953 FAX 207 773-0095

June 27, 2012

Dear Sisters and Brothers in the Diocese of Maine,

As you may know, your Diocesan Standing Committee has recently completed a Mutual Study of Ministry with our Bishop.

The study had two key parts. First, we published an electronic survey, which was completed by just under 350 people. We then conducted personal interviews with 15 members of the diocese, who were selected as a representative sampling of people who have experience of Bishop Lane's ministry.

We were assisted by the Rev. Thad Bennett of Vermont, who helped us design the electronic survey and the interview questions. Thad received the survey results and the interview summaries, and met with the Standing Committee and Bishop Lane in mid-June to review what we were learning.

This letter is a preliminary report to the Diocese. We don't yet have Thad's final report, and there's a lot for us still to learn from all the information you have given us through the survey and interviews. But some of the key findings are clear, and we want to share them with you right away.

Some of the important things we have heard include:

- There is a deep and widespread sense of gratitude to Bishop Lane for his ministry. Members of the Diocese, both clergy and lay, observe that the Bishop's ministry is a challenging one, and express respect and appreciation for the way Bishop Lane carries it out. The two areas people spoke of in particular were (1) the Bishop's visitations in parishes, his preaching, and his attentiveness to pastoral needs; and (2) his boldness in identifying the need for adaptive change as the church moves into a future that will look very different from the past.
- There is also a general sense that the diocese is in good shape. That is noteworthy, especially given the financial pressure the diocese is under, and the need for adaptive change that Bishop Lane has been speaking of.
- Most people believe that the church will look quite different in ten years. There is less agreement about whether we are making adaptive change at the right pace.

While many think that we are on track, others expressed concern that we are talking about change rather than implementing it.

- There was wide agreement that Bishop Lane is gifted at directing and inspiring processes of shared discernment, such as the Mission Study Groups that he called for at Convention a few years ago. Similarly, members of Diocesan committees expressed appreciation for his willingness to offer them appropriate direction while at the same time allowing them to do their work without imposing his judgment. However, a number of people expressed a desire for the Bishop to be more assertive in setting direction for the diocese—to direct decisions as well as discussions.
- While there was broad understanding that a Bishop's responsibilities extend to the whole church, there were many who expressed a wish that the Bishop focus less time and attention outside the diocese. Some also expressed concern that the Bishop not spread himself too thin, or risk his own health by doing more than was sustainable.

When we asked, "is there anything else you would like us to know," nearly everyone reiterated their thankfulness for Bishop Lane's ministry, and many mentioned the loving support that Gretchen Lane extends, not only to her Bishop husband, but to the whole diocese.

Our preliminary conclusion is that we are blessed to be well-led into the challenges that face the church. At the same time, there are some specific ways in which Bishop Lane may refine that leadership, and we will be studying the survey and interview results to sharpen our own understanding of all that we have heard.

We will report more fully in the fall, after we have crunched the data and reflected on what more we can learn from all that you told us.

Thank you to everyone who has been involved in this process: to Thad Bennett for his expertise, to the Members of the Standing Committee for their work designing and carrying out the study, and to Bishop Lane for his warm desire to hear from all of us, and to the members of the Diocese for telling us what we needed to hear.

Yours faithfully,

Michael N. Ambler, Jr.+  
President, the Standing Committee