The Board of Trustees held our yearly retreat at the Mercy Center in Auburn. Over the course of three days, we worked to review 2025 and strategize our priorities for the coming year.

The Board of Trustees has taken on six strategic priorities for 2026:

1. The Board will support the work of the Future Finance and Missional Planning Subcommittee as they study and recommend changes to apportionment. The board expects regular communications from the subcommittee to the board and to the diocese. The board hopes the process will build trust and faith and encouraged the subcommittee to investigate best practices and other approaches from comparable dioceses. This process is like a congregation calling a rector – we will be able to share with the diocese what part of the process the subcommittee and board are currently in, but not all of the details. We hope that you pray for the subcommittee as they begin their work in the next few weeks.

   Members of the subcommittee are: The Very Rev. Cliff Haggenjos, Chair; John Nycamp, Treasurer, Kevin Donahue, Chancellor, Rev. Diana Deen, Sharon Burke-Polona, Rev. Amy Denney Zuniga; Rev. Brad Helmuth; and the Rev. Geri Cunningham. The Rev. Anne Pearson will serve as the Chaplain to the Subcommittee while Kati Braak will serve as the staff resource person.

2. Our second goal is to take the lessons learned from the two-year Racial Justice Audit and weave them the work of the diocese. Canon Julie and Jo Ann Williams, Racial Justice Audit Co-chair, are working on identifying potential Sacred Ground members to invite to form a six-person team in each of the seven deaneries. Each deanery team will appoint a team leader who will oversee the progress of the team and keep the Dean informed of their progress. It is vitally important that the teams thoroughly read their deanery's report and address each of the findings. The team leader can expect to be contacted by Commission for Intercultural Ministries for a progress report to be presented to the Board of Trustees. In addition, a progress report will be required for the yearly Diocesan Convention. Jo Ann and others associated with the second year of the Racial Justice Audit of deaneries and churches will be available for consultation as the teams address their deanery findings.

3. Support Congregational Vitality

   We have a strategic team looking at strategies to support congregational vitality for all sizes of our congregations. The team identified the need to canvass our congregations to determine what they need, ask how they are changing lives in their communities, and discover what their assets, skills and energy are focused on. To hear more about their work, watch this video.

4. Lift Up Lay Leaders

   As our Lift Up Lay Leaders strategic team looked back in 2025, they celebrated the work of launching a page on the diocesan website that put all the information that lay leaders needed in one place – use this link to learn more. (Lay Ministry and Leadership - The Episcopal Diocese of Northern California). We also deepened our understanding of Safe Church and identified more work that needs to be done. To hear more about the lifting up lay leader goals, watch this video.

5. Empower Regional Relationships

   The Empower Regional Relationships strategic team celebrated the Convocation brainstorming project in 2025. As they move forward in 2026, the Empower team hopes to host more inclusive deanery gatherings that are not just for convention delegates and work on ways to improve deanery communications.

6. Ask Why?

   The Ask Why strategic team believes that as we listen and share our missional stories, we find common ground throughout the diocese. In 2025, the Ask Why strategic team developed a preliminary sense of what missionality is and invited some congregations to tell their stories. We learned that the diocese needs to grow our capacity to listen. In 2026, the Ask Why team will engage with congregations to explore the "why" question and develop a sense of common ground that exists within our diverse diocese as they live in their individual contexts.

   The Board of Trustees left our retreat energized for 2026. Watch enews throughout the year for more updates.

Margie Harrison-Smith

Vice President