

## **MEMORANDUM**

**TO: Bishop Braxton & Members of the Steering Committee**

**FROM: Maureen Gallagher & Tom Reid, The Reid Group**

**RE: October 16 Meetings: Reflections, Observations, Next Steps**

**DATE: October 27, 2008**

We are once again writing to thank you for your presence and participation in the meetings. At this time we want to offer you our reflections, observations and recommended next steps which are informed by the small group suggested actions.

1. We believe the meetings were two more positive steps in the process of Dialogue of Renewal. Despite a smaller turnout than was hoped for, those who did attend engaged in respectful listening and conversation.
2. It is quite clear to us that strengthening trust continues to be a critical need and that building a more positive relationship among the priests and between the priests and Bishop based on respect and trust is possible and requires an ongoing priority focus.
3. We understand that many priests are participating in priest support groups. We also have the impression that those who heard Fr. Ron Knott had a positive experience. It appears to us that support groups and some type of follow-up with Fr. Knott and/or his material can be two resources for building relationship and calling the priests and Bishop to a greater sense of community and common mission.
4. With respect to improving communication, conversation and relationship, we believe this new moment of opportunity to build a more fruitful relationship among priests and between the priests and Bishop is still at a fragile point and requires consistent care and attention.
5. We continue to observe challenges in the area of interpersonal communication. It is our belief that the best communication is in person, second best is by phone. We also believe direct communication is preferred over indirect. More personal and direct communication needs to be encouraged.
6. Another dimension of improving communication has to do with discussing how to communicate the progress of the Dialogue of Renewal to include religious communities and the laity. Consideration might be given to setting aside time for the "formation" of the Pastoral Council, including spiritual formation and clarification of roles, responsibilities, expectations, etc. so that they could become a valuable asset to the Bishop.

7. In the areas of collaboration and consultation the suggested actions point to improvement through mutual development of agendas and a desire for making better use of the consultative bodies. Further, we believe that given the needs and skill level of many of the priests that both priests and Bishop would benefit from having these meetings facilitated by a trained facilitator.

We also believe that forward progress is not a given. It should be expected that additional misunderstandings will occur and that the diocese could anticipate this and be ready with an ombuds person or skilled party who can help parties navigate any potential breakdown or impasse.

8. We believe that there is a need and opportunity to look to the future and let go of the past. This can be accomplished by engaging people, including parish leadership, in the development of shared values, vision and diocesan strategic plan.
9. To build on the progress to date there needs to be an action oriented focus. The small group suggested actions for priests, Bishop and priests and Bishop need to be discussed, prioritized, implemented and monitored for progress.
10. With the October meetings the initial phase of this process is completed and yet there is a general recognition that much more work remains to be done. The Steering Committee has been very helpful in supporting the process. We recognize that there is a desire to not create additional committees. We believe there is a need to assist with the implementation of the suggested actions and evaluate progress. We recommend that the Steering Committee, a task force of the Presbyteral Council or the Executive Committee of the Presbyteral Council needs to be charged with the responsibility to see that this process moves forward.

We look forward to talking with you at our next opportunity. Blessings!