

October, 2019

Dear Bishop Steve,

Our goal is for the attached document to be suitable for you to distribute to any audience you wish, and it was crafted with that end in mind. However, you are our pastor, so we also want to share on a deeper level what the experience of the Task Force was like for us.

We wrestled. In response to your charge, we four women and three men grappled in the context of our differing beliefs about the ordination of women to the priesthood, within a framework of the spectrum of our theological training, and given an array of our church leadership positions. We wrestled with what is meant by “the priesthood of all believers” as well as with the biblical basis for the need for women in leadership. From many angles we considered how to fulfill the commitment made by the College of Bishops. Perhaps foremost, we engaged with and were impacted by *each others’ stories*. Some told of hurt and exclusion--by either intent or mere carelessness--or of misunderstanding the aim of another. Some of us realized our own participation in the wounding and committed to repent. Three of us shared how our backgrounds led us to believe that God does not gift women for leadership and that we acted on those beliefs without understanding the consequences, until the Holy Spirit began to teach otherwise.

We learned. In the course of one meeting in person and several more held remotely, we listened to each other, and every one of us learned. We made a safe space for us all to bring our gifts to the others, and to benefit from others’ knowledge and experiences in return. We followed up when auxiliary conversations were needed for clarity or apology, or to process what we heard in a meeting.

We wrote. Sometimes alone, or in twos or threes as assigned, we created more than 30 pages of documents in various formats. In meetings, we took notes on top of what had been written.

What a unifying experience this was for us! We now consider each other friends. We could not be more grateful for the privilege of having participated; thank you very much for the invitation.

Based on the fruit we have seen among us, we are excited to see what happens in our diocese and beyond.

With much appreciation,

*Claudia Greggs, Gary Ball, John Hall, Joshua Yoder, Lucy Albert,
Van Weston, and Virginia Musselman*