

April 9, 2009

The Rev. Canon Michael Hunn  
The Episcopal Diocese of North Carolina  
200 West Morgan St., Suite 300  
Raleigh, NC 27601

Dear Canon Hunn+,

Thank you very much for your time yesterday. I thoroughly enjoyed talking with you about St. Paul's, Monroe. As you know, I've been interested in them for quite some time. Our conversation indeed confirmed why.

I'm very attracted to the parishioners' respect for the liturgical and sacramental traditions of the Episcopal Church and for their desire to use the beauty (spiritual and physical) of the Church and its customs as a way to attract newcomers. I too share a deep reverence for the ancient customs of the Church: monastic traditions, such as the Daily Office, as well as contemplative offerings that have long since been forgotten or underutilized, e.g. Tenebrae and Choral Evensong. Additionally, I see within their profile the interweaving of the old with the new. This is most conspicuous in their hopes to preserve the past while using their heritage as a means to attract new generations, many of whom are searching and longing for depth and authenticity in their own spiritual lives. St. Paul's appears to understand well that nurturing a rich, inner spiritual life is critical to understanding God's call to an active, outward mission life. They must go hand in hand for a worshipping community to be a balanced community.

Another component of St. Paul's I find appealing is their emphasis on growing the youth and adult programs. There is little that excites me more than to see people's light bulbs go off as their faith is enlivened by what they learn. As a priest for six years, a seminary adjunct professor, along with my own graduate work, and my serving on the Diocese of Atlanta's Commission on Education, I have much to share with St. Paul's that could help them see that vision through: a wide range of experience in various topics, curricula, and educational formats/venues. They also describe a desire to begin forming relationships with surrounding college settings. Based on my work with Maryville College in Maryville, Tennessee (a town not unlike Monroe) when I served at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, along with my service to Canterbury Episcopal Campus Ministry during my undergraduate years at The College of William and Mary, I have some very positive and definite ideas for ministering to college students. In terms of their goals for Christian Education, everything they described I have helped to organize in other settings. I thoroughly enjoy getting folks of different ages together to learn from one another. I also love facilitating discussions that lead people to discover that as they ask the questions that most intrigue them, frequently do they already have the answer; that's usually what gives rise to the question in the first place.

St. Paul's also seeks a rector who can assist in reorganizing their committee infrastructure. I see within their expressed hopes a desire to spread responsibility for various committees, as well as encourage new participants in the running of St. Paul's. With four years of training in Family Systems Theory, Organizational Development, and Appreciative Inquiry, along with my service on Bishop Alexander's Congregational Consultant Committee, I believe my skills would fit well with their aspirations. Furthermore, my past work in the construction of a parish hall at St. Andrew's and my current work with the Diocese of Atlanta's Commission on Stewardship could be worth sharing as St. Paul's seeks financial stability, the development of a capital campaign, and increased giving, all vital components of the infrastructural changes they seek.

Above it all, I specifically hear St. Paul's calling for a rector to help promote a greater sense of unity and shared leadership of the church. When the laity and clergy share in their respective ministries, the parish becomes a healthy and empowered worshipping community; a true Christian family that, together, can weather many storms and threats to the faithful bonds that hold them together. Then we indeed become the one body of Christ reaching out to those within God's Kingdom and fulfilling our mission to "restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ." (BCP, 855) Nobody is expendable.

As you can see, I am quite excited about the possibility of talking further with St. Paul's. They already seem so energetic and vibrant and yet they boldly are seeking more. As they maintain respect for tradition and exercise the faithful courage to explore new horizons, growth in all areas of the parish would seem to be inevitable. In the Spirit and in God's time, the possibilities are limitless.

Let this letter represent my intention to be part of the search process at St. Paul's, Monroe. Accompanying this letter is my resumé and my CDO Profile. I do look forward to next steps.

Faithfully,  
Fr. Brad Smith+