



**THE BISHOP OF NORTH CAROLINA**

October 30, 2013

Dear Sisters in Christ,

At the upcoming 198<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention of our Diocese, I will invite us all to participate in a campaign called Harvest for Hospitality to support the incredible work of the Episcopal Farmworker Ministry.

This ministry is one that both shares the faith of Jesus through word and sacrament and lives that faith in works of presence, compassion and service. The Episcopal Farmworker Ministry embodies a way of being the Church in the missionary environment we have called "Galilee of the 21<sup>st</sup> century."

For a few years now, we have used first-century biblical Galilee as a metaphor for understanding something of this 21<sup>st</sup> century reality in which we seek to follow Jesus, to be his disciples, and to witness and proclaim the Good News.

The impact of that reality crystalized for me a few years ago when I first met Mennonite pastor the Rev. Hugh Hollowell in a coffee shop. In the course of our conversation, he said something that has become a mantra for me. He said that the Mennonite community had called him to come to Raleigh to create a community of faith on the streets in the center of the city. LOVE WINS Ministry has been the result, a church defined not by a building but by real faith in Jesus Christ as Lord, by commitment to real discipleship that follows in his way, and by the inclusion and embrace of both folk who are homeless and folk who live in homes.

When we began to talk about the reason the Mennonites had asked him to do this he said, "In our time the church can no longer wait for the congregation to come to it, the church must go where the congregation already is."

The Episcopal Farmworker Ministry is actually living out being the Church in Galilee. This ministry goes out into the camps and fields where the farmworkers live and work. The Holy Eucharist is celebrated right in the fields. Father Tony Rojas spends time with the workers and provides opportunities for rest and recreation. Practical needs like clothing and other things are tended. Silvia Cenderjas and Maria Acosta provide immigration and citizenship counseling and assistance. This ministry is a ministry of presence, witness and service. That's Church. That's a model of being the Episcopal Church, the Body of Jesus Christ, in this 21<sup>st</sup> century world we call Galilee. And that is a model of faithfully obeying the command of Jesus who said to his disciples, "Go into all the world" (Mark 16:15).

The Rt. Rev. Anne Hodges-Copple joins me in thanking you for all you have done over the years to advance the work of the Gospel in this Diocese. And we thank you for the ways we together can follow Jesus into Galilee and into God's new future that is now upon us.

Keep the faith,

Michael B. Curry