

**Letter from Bishop Little**  
**April, 2001**

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Ten years ago, I participated in the second of what became three short-term mission trips to Uganda. Our team of five Americans led a clergy conference in a diocese northwest of the capital city of Kampala. This region had a long and tragic history of tribal conflict. In fact, the diocese itself included members of two tribes, and diocesan life was characterized by intense inter-tribal rivalry, competition for positions of power, even bitterness. I will never forget how it felt to walk into a large, open room on the grounds of the diocesan school, filled with perhaps 150 clergy and their spouses. While I couldn't speak the local languages – the entire conference was conducted through translators – the tension in the room was completely cross-cultural. I didn't need a translator to tell me that something was wrong! The bishop, however, had resolved to confront the tension and bring healing to his diocese; and so he entitled the conference: WE NEED EACH OTHER. For five days, we explored what it means for Christians to recognize their mutual interdependence. Friends who have traveled to this diocese in succeeding years tell me that the Lord has brought healing, vitality, and an enormous enthusiasm for evangelism. Jesus has been doing his work of reconciliation, and in that process has energized a community for the Gospel.

All of which brings me to our core values:

- A passion for the Gospel of Jesus Christ
- A heart for the lost
- A willingness to do whatever it takes
- A commitment to one another

In this article, I'm highlighting the fourth value, *a commitment to one another*. St. Paul describes the church as the "body of Christ," by which he means much more than simply a company of people with similar interests and convictions. "We were baptized into one body in a single Spirit...and we were all given the same Spirit to drink" (Cor. 12:13). We're supernaturally connected to Jesus and to one another. This has an intensely practical application. "The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need for you,' and nor can the head say to the feet, 'I have no need of you.' ...If one part [of the body] is hurt, all the parts share its pain. And if one part is honored, all the parts share its joy" (1 Cor. 12:21, 26). In other words, WE NEED EACH OTHER.

A diocese is more than simply a confederation of congregations, just as a parish is more than an amalgam of individuals. Jesus has put us together for his purposes. The Diocese of Northern Indiana is a single unit, a missionary body supernaturally linked by Jesus himself and committed to work together for the spread of God's kingdom. Each congregation is a missionary outpost of the diocese, a local expression of a larger whole.

Again, the application of this principle is intensely practical. For example, I have asked the Rev. Jim Lodwick to serve as Hispanic Ministry Consultant for the diocese. The northern third of the state of Indiana is experiencing a wonderful influx of Spanish-speaking people – from the Ohio to the Illinois borders, from the Michigan line in the north to the Diocese of Indianapolis in the south – and our challenge is to find ways of reaching out to our new neighbors. Where do we start? What model of ministry would be most effective for us? Fr. Lodwick’s assignment is to do some exploration and to make recommendations to Diocesan Council and ultimately to Convention. And then, by God’s grace, we will inaugurate a new ministry. Wherever we begin, be it in Elkhart or Plymouth or the Calumet or Fort Wayne, we will *all* be involved. We will marshal resources, finances, personnel – together. WE NEED EACH OTHER. This is true not only for Hispanic ministry, but for every aspect of our life: from youth ministry to congregational development, from church planting to the recruitment of a new generation of ordained leaders. Small church and large, rural and urban, resource-rich (not many of those!) and financially-strapped, WE NEED EACH OTHER. Our challenge, entering a new millennium, is to find creative ways of supporting one another, affirming one another’s ministries, seeing every congregation with a vital role in a single vision to reach our part of God’s world for Jesus Christ.

I ask you to mark your calendars now for a special celebration of our commitment to one another. On Saturday, May 11, 2002, the entire diocese (I mean that – absolutely everyone!) is invited to a “rally day” at Goshen College. We’ll worship, learn, celebrate, enjoy fellowship, and above all be encouraged to commit ourselves afresh to the Lord and to one another in this great missionary venture. Details will follow in the coming months. In the meantime...save the date; plan to come; expect a miraculous outpouring of the Holy Spirit as we walk together into God’s future. WE NEED EACH OTHER.

Yours in Christ,

The Rt. Rev. Edward S. Little II  
Bishop of Northern Indiana