



Diocese of the
MID-ATLANTIC

Anglican Church in North America

September 17, 2015

Dear Friends.

By this time you ought to be teachers... ” (Hebrews 5:12)

The author of the Letter to the Hebrews is chiding his readers to learn and grow as disciples of Christ. He says that they’ve been Christians long enough that they shouldn’t need to be taught all over again the basics of the faith. They still need spiritual “milk” because they’re not ready for the “solid food” that’s for those who are mature in the faith, those “have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil” (verse 14).

As many of our churches are gearing up their fall education programs, I hope that you are looking for opportunities to go deeper in your relationship with Jesus and in your understanding of the faith. Too often, we start off the fall with a bang. But then, despite our best intentions, we—and our children—skip a few Sundays, we drift away from the class, we drop out of the small group, we flag in our daily study of Scripture.

I remember the time our parish offered a particular course on discipleship and we had an incredibly high drop-out rate. Now, if you think about it, dropping out of discipleship class is as ironic as always being late for time management class or never getting around to enrolling in a procrastinator’s class.

Growing to maturity in Jesus takes time, it takes perseverance, and all too many fall out along the way and miss out on the depth of joy and intimacy that Jesus offers us.

Years ago, the adult education team at All Saints’ Church (Woodbridge, VA) created [a self-diagnostic tool](#) by which those who were serious about growing in Christ could assess their discipleship in a dozen areas of Christian life and ministry through some 70 questions. It was also a real help to disciplers and spiritual directors in identifying both strengths and areas for

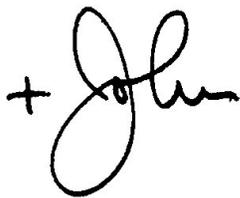
growth. We need to be honest with ourselves about where we are in our growth in Christ and where we, too, need to move on from milk to solid food.

Discipleship, though, is not just about me. In biology, one of the defining aspects of maturity is the ability to reproduce. A mature Christian disciple is one who is able to make more disciples, to bring others to Christ and help them learn and grow.

A great resource to help us become the evangelizing believers and churches we long to be is our Great Commission Committee's Pre-Synod Workshop on Evangelism on Friday, November 13, 3:00-6:30 p.m. It's open to all, not just Synod delegates. It's free and dinner is provided; it leads into the opening Eucharist of Synod, which is also open to all. [Details are below.](#)

As Hebrews goes on to say (in the delightfully vivid language of *The Message* version), "So come on, let's leave the preschool finger-painting exercises on Christ and get on with the grand work of art. Grow up in Christ."

Faithfully yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ John". The plus sign is a simple cross, and the name "John" is written in a cursive, flowing script.

The Rt. Rev. John A. M. Guernsey