



What a privilege it is to stand here today and to have led NAECEd for the past year. This is a vibrant, important association. As educators we understand that as a group we are wiser and stronger than we may be as individuals.

You have a remarkable board of directors. They have given more time, more energy, more thought and stewardship to NAECEd than they had any idea they would be giving this year. It can be daunting to lead a group of leaders. That was not the case with this group of faithful, inspirational, remarkable leaders. They reflect each of you in their wisdom and grace.

This has been a year of tremendous activity. This board has tackled major projects.

When NAECEd was established fourteen years ago, creating a certification program was one of the original goals. It was the only goal that had not been moved forward. A great deal of work this year by members of the board and membership has it one step closer to having a program "resolution or discussion ready" for the 2012 General Convention.

It has been presented in draft form to the Standing Commission for Lifelong Formation and they are eager to have this work continue.

The collaborative work that Kate Gillooly spoke of last year as being so important to a stronger NAECEd moved forward this year. Your board has been in conversations with every organization in the Episcopal Church that is interested in being linked in some way to NAECEd.

We are delighted that the National Organization of Episcopal Resource Centers - NOERC - has partnered with us again this year and will continue to do so to offer you exceptional conferences that will feed you educationally and spiritually.

Youth directors, diocesan missionaries, authors, camp and conference center directors, seminaries, publishers and the Church Center have been discussing with us how we might work together.

It is important that we find our common ground. We are all educators. Finding our way to work together for the great good of Our Church makes good sense.

As NAECEd begins its fourteenth year, you might be interested to know that we are the largest professional association in the Episcopal Church.

We have members from forty states and Canada.

Through our listserv, we give voice to each member of NAECEd.

We don't always agree YET we listen and respond with great respect for one another. For years I have said that Congress could take a lesson from NAECEd.

We don't say, "This is the right way or this is the ONLY way." We say, "We present options. Choose from them until you find the way that works best in your situation."



We are an association of faith, of grace and of inspiration.

If only everyone in our church, in our world, was valued and treated with the respect and great regard that we show one another.

This has been a hard year for too many of our members. Some of our members have faced devastating health issues with enormous courage and grace. Some of us have been allowed to live on the sidelines of their battles as prayerful participants. We pray.

Others of us are caught in that place where we are caring for aging parents, young families, and careers that can be mentally and physically challenging. Finding a balance is at times - impossible. We encourage.

Too many NAECED members have lost their careers this year. During times of monetary crisis, painful decisions are made in all companies. Sadly our parishes, diocesan offices and the Church Center have not been spared. We question.

I wonder - Why does it seem the person most likely to be let go is the Christian formation specialist? Often the person let go will be the one attached to children's ministries.

I wonder – Do you love your work?

I wonder - How many of you 40 hour employees arrive at 9 and leave at 5 each day?

How many of you work 60 – 70 hour weeks or 40 hour weeks when you were hired to work 15 or are working as a volunteer when you need to be paid?

How many of you spend hours on the phone or in person with a parent, child, or youth who needs someone to care?

How many of you spend part of your “big salaries” on items you need to operate your program?

How many of you spent your own money to attend this conference even though you are only one of the many who will benefit by your attendance?

How many of you have a voice in staff meetings? In vestry meetings? In Chapter meetings? In diocesan meetings? In the wider Church?

How many of you would advocate for a child, a youth, a young adult or a senior without end; YET will stand in the shadows of your humility when it comes to advocating for yourself?

Why is it necessary for me to pose these questions?



I stand today in front of great minds, compassionate hearts, respectful leaders who understand Our Church and who work tirelessly and selflessly to help form Christians.

As you are the advocates for your flocks also be the advocates for yourselves.

On that rare occasion when a congregation or diocese hears a Christian educator thanked, does the congregation think, "Why are we paying this person?"

Don't let those you report to and serve wonder about what you do. Make sure they know what you do.

Make sure your boss really understands what you do and is your advocate every bit as much as you are hers or his.

Make sure your flocks are your advocates every bit as much as you are theirs. If they aren't your advocates and you are not working to make your voice heard, you might as well start packing your books as soon as you return home.

As The Church changes – and we know that it is changing because many of us are helping to effect change to keep The Church alive - YOU are the people who will lead the changes in the way the church educates and forms.

You will lead with respect, with compassion, with determination, with joy and with love because that is who YOU are.

As you advocate for what must change and what must remain the same, advocate for yourself and for your colleagues.

Do it because NAECED needs you.

Do it because The Episcopal Church needs you!

May God bless you and your ministries and may your ministries reflect the joy within YOU!

Thank you.

Deborah Bell Rodahaffer, President 2010
NAECED (National Association for Episcopal Christian Educators)