



Episcopal Diocese of Vermont
A Strategic Plan for Growth and Ministry
2005-2010

Reviewed and re-affirmed by Diocesan Council
2008-2009

Formation
Liberation
Communication
Connection
Celebration

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The Vision

The Diocesan Council envisions a lively, mission-oriented church that discerns and welcomes God's call to us as a Diocese. Five interwoven themes emerge from this call:

Formation

that promotes lifelong Christian learning and growth across all ages; increases and develops existing educational opportunities; and supports the ongoing development of spiritual resources such as the Christian Meditation Center and the training/certification of spiritual directors.

Liberation

that increases active involvement in identifying and expanding local and statewide social justice programs; maintains ongoing efforts to dismantle racism; supports international social justice programs; increases the number of Jubilee Centers in Vermont; and develops liturgies that celebrate these efforts.

Communication

that conveys the good news of Jesus Christ and the ministries and mission of Vermont Episcopalians to one another and their communities through a variety of media; takes advantage of current technology to share information and resources; enables all congregations to utilize such technology; and supports other ongoing ministries.

Connection

that increases Bishop and Ministry Support Team contact with congregations, particularly in geographically isolated areas; establishes a comprehensive strategy for the stewardship of human, financial and physical resources; supports and further develops congregational and diocesan leadership.

Celebration

that recognizes and give thanks for the abundant gifts and resources we have been given for the mission to which God calls us. In particular, we celebrate the gifts and talents of our people and the institutional resources of our diocese, such as Rock Point, Saint Paul's Cathedral, Mission Farm, the Bishop Booth Conference Center, Rock Point School, the Brookhaven Home and School, and the Rock Point Summer Conferences.

Our action plan is ambitious and exciting. It reflects our commitment to the ministry of the baptized and indicates what we believe God is calling us to do over the next few years. The five themes are threads weaving through and unifying all areas of the action plan.

Diocesan Council is firmly committed to leading the implementation of this plan by working with committee chairs and others responsible for particular ministries. Council will review the strategic plan annually and make adjustments as necessary.

*To God be the glory for these ministries
and for what is yet to be.*

Key Ministry Area #1: Christian Education and Youth Ministry

- 1) **To develop a leadership training institute that will help congregants (especially teachers and youth leaders) be leaders in the church and society.**

By establishing the development of a leadership training institute as a current priority, Diocesan Council members believe all other goals originally set forth in this key ministry area of the Diocesan Plan for Growth and Ministry will progress naturally. This progression is expected to include development of Christian formation training programs in every parish and dissemination of Diocesan Resource Center materials through increased use of technology, web site, storage capacity, and regional access to materials. A leadership training institute will provide a means to reinvigorate/recreate Sunday School spiritual retreats to nurture those who serve children and families.

Additionally, developing leaders will help to establish and support a dynamic youth ministry which ministers to the whole state, including: leadership development for young people and adults; regular retreats (some youth-led and some led by outside resources); spiritual development retreats/pilgrimages for youth; mission and service trips; congregational sponsored events. A network of regional youth leaders is envisioned – leaders who will provide support, ideas, and experiences, and develop

spiritual bonds to help nurture individuals who serve young people – creating and using efficient and effective communication tools.

Increased participation in the Rock Point Summer Camps will be another natural progression from the energy created by intentionally training and developing leadership in this area.

Diocesan Council 2007 Recommendations for moving forward in Key Ministry Area #1:

Ask the Commission on Ministry: Committee on Christian Formation (COM:CCF) to work with the Canon for Ministry Development and Youth/Children's Ministry (CMD-YCM) to develop a presentation on Parish Christian Formation Leadership. This may include conferring with members of the Christian Education Task Force and congregational youth leaders. COM:CCF/CMD-YCM group to decide what model of leadership training will follow—possibilities include: funding individuals to attend training at the Episcopal Divinity School or Kanuga to bring new ideas back to Vermont or using existing resources identified by the COM:CCF; using the system already in place in the diocese for wardens' and treasurers' training to hold annual seminars in four locations throughout the diocese (logistics for each site provided by two sharing deaneries, perhaps meeting a peripheral need of strengthening the deaneries); developing a twice-yearly series of "in-service" days for Sunday School leaders and youth group leaders. Leadership training could: discuss various curricula (sharing experience); disseminate Diocesan Resource Center materials (Goal 3); provide resources for a dynamic youth ministry (Goal 4); provide for spiritual nurture for leaders of Sunday School and Youth Ministries (Goal 6); lead to a training program for Christian formation in the parishes (Goal 1); greater participation in Rock Point summer camps (Goal 5); and growth in youth activities.

Other possibilities to be considered by the COM:CCF/CMD-YCM group are: explore youth programs and broaden our scope from "just" Episcopal children and youth to Christian community children and youth, or from parish groups to larger outreach projects (such as New Orleans—which would need to be planned at least a year in advance and vigorously "marketed" from the beginning of the school year).

Key Ministry Area #2: Parish Life and Spiritual Growth Ministry

- 1) Increase opportunities in the diocese for spiritual growth.
 - Revitalize spiritual life committee of Diocesan Council.
 - Explore Diocesan sponsorship of Education for Ministry (EfM) Program.
 - Continue Holy Tuesday Holy Eucharist/Retreat Day at the Cathedral.
 - Increase and support retreat and spiritual life programs at Bishop Booth Conference Center.
- 2) Support a variety of approaches to spiritual direction, including the identification of spiritual directors.
 - Explore opportunities for expansion and training in the area of spiritual direction.
 - Explore the possibility of publishing a diocesan list of spiritual directors.
- 3) The Christian Meditation Center continues to actively fulfill its mission.

Key Ministry Area #3: Outreach and Social Justice

- 1) **Social Justice:** In five years, there will be a new level of Social Justice commitment throughout the Episcopal Diocese of Vermont.
40 parishes will be members of Vermont Interfaith Action (VIA); Parish participation will include: congregational development; one-to-one conversations; social justice issue identification; leadership development; community power analysis; agenda development; action on at least one social justice issue
- 2) **Outreach:** Identify existing parish programs statewide.
- 3) **Outreach:** Each parish has at least one outreach program and implements multi-parish and interfaith outreach programs.
- 4) **Outreach:** Five parishes have become, or are in process of becoming, Jubilee Parishes.
- 5) **Racism:** The Dismantling Racism Commission (DRC) will sponsor three (3) one day trainings in

Anti-Racism for diocesan clergy and identified lay leadership.

- 6) **Racism:** Provide “An Introductory Workshop on White Privilege” for every congregation in diocese.
- 7) **International Ministries:** That every active church in the diocese be aware of international social justice issues and minister to at least one area of need through personal action or financial support.
- 8) **International Ministries:** Every parish will be involved in supporting at least one international relief project and be able to articulate theological basis for that support
- 9) **Liturgy:** Collect and determine need for liturgies that address social justice and environmental concerns
- 10) **Caring for God’s Creation**

Parishes will conduct energy audits of their churches and other buildings, report their audits to the diocese and commit to action plans for reducing the carbon footprint of the congregation’s buildings.

Parishes will develop EcoTeams of parishioners to cut back parishioners’ carbon footprint.

Parishes will cease to fertilize their lawns with fertilizer containing phosphorus and will encourage members of their congregations to do the same.

Key Ministry Area #4: Communications

- 1) Continue development of user-friendly web site for the diocese.
- 2) Utilize all media to communicate to the wider community.
- 3) Offer all congregations opportunity for adequate access to the Internet.
- 4) Continue use of email lists and listserves to enhance interactive communication.
- 5) Increase visibility of the Episcopal Diocese of Vermont throughout the state.
- 6) Encourage and increase the use of conference calls for diocesan committee meetings.
- 7) Establish a Communications Committee (“Think Tank”), to be convened and chaired by a member of Council, and to address, for example, exploration of electronic media (Mountain Echo) and Websites.

Key Ministry Area #5: Organizational, Structural and Financial

- 1) The Diocese will establish a stewardship strategy to support baptismal ministry in all parishes.
- 2) The Diocese will assist and support the development of a strong planned giving program and fundraising possibilities in all interested parishes.
- 3) The Diocese will examine the potential for a capital campaign in order to strengthen churches, help develop strong leadership and obtain abundant resources.
- 4) The Diocese will review parish assessment policies, effectiveness and consistency of implementation.
- 5) The Diocese will implement a strategy for deepening baptismal ministry and work to alleviate a sense of isolation reported by and known to exist in parishes around the Diocese.

Key Ministry Area #6: Parish to Parish and Parish to Diocese

- 1) **Increased Overnight Episcopal Visitations**
 - Bishop’s Overnight Visitations: Council affirms Bishop Ely’s progress on this goal. He has made 9-10 overnight visits each of the past four years.
 - This could be restated as: Ministry Developer Team meeting calendar is published in the Mountain Echo and on the Diocesan Web Site.
- 2) **More visible Diocesan presence in all regions.**

This goal is being accomplished in ways we had not anticipated in the Strategic plan. Steps taken include: Ministry Fairs in several locations, encouragement of other committees to follow Council’s example and schedule meetings all over the state.
- 3) **Encourage Mutuality in Decision Making**
 - Budget Summits create forum for groups seeking budgetary support to present their goals to Diocesan Convention Delegates.
 - Clergy gatherings and Fresh Start appear to be helping clergy focus on mutuality in leadership. This could be expanded to encourage congrega-

tions not in transition to undergo regular mutual ministry reviews and create policies that encourage mutuality in leadership.

Key Ministry Area #7

Rock Point

[Not Finalized]

- 1) Develop land use management plan that identifies best uses for various parts of the property and outlines procedures for management of sensitive ecological systems.**

Identify various ecological communities and human communities that make up the property and map these.

Identify the values the diocese wishes to govern the use of the property as articulated in the Rock Point Board vision statement of May 14, 2004.

Clarify deed restrictions and boundaries. Determine need for and feasibility of a property assessment.

Use information from above processes to develop a land use plan for the property that protects significant natural communities; enhances the connections with adjacent and nearby properties; supports the conservation goals of area community groups (City of Burlington, VT Biodiversity Project; Nature Conservancy).

- 2) Expand Rock Point's ministry as a spiritual life center.**

Develop the potential for personal retreats.

Explore possibility of resident spiritual director or monastic community.

Explore opportunities for collaboration with Cathedral's center for meditation.

Research possible models including Society of St. John the Evangelist, Aylesford Priory and Canterbury's International Education Center.

Development of plan based on research.

Identify funding source.

Modify conference center for individual use (ex. some private baths).

- 3) Develop pilot program for ecological education for Burlington's Old and New North End children.**

Rock Point Board (RPB) Mission and Program committee develops preliminary plan, including the identification of strategic partners (Burlington school system, Cathedral Church of St. Paul, Shelburne Farms, VT Institute of Natural Science, Burlington Conservation Board and Dept of Parks and Recreation)

Rock Point (RP) Board identifies funding sources.

- 4) Develop a plan for constructively sharing the natural resource of Rock Point with the larger community through controlled public access.**

Build permanent funding into diocesan budget for current security program. (Funding details in support documents).

Develop plan for appropriate public access in cooperation with City of Burlington, Vermont Land Trust and other strategic partners.

- 5) Build youth program/educational facility to house Rock Point Summer Conference, DYC activities and other current and future programs, and to complement BBCC.**

Would follow the necessary steps involved in creating a new building, including defining a program, hiring an architect, designing the structure and constructing the building.

- 6) Maintain current facilities in good working order.**

The Buildings and Grounds Committee of the Rock Point Board develops building inventory and sets priorities for maintenance needs including new roofs for all buildings at BBCC (see work plan progress in Rock Point documentation).

Identify funding source.

Establish capital maintenance fund.