

A Strategic Plan for Growth and Ministry

The Episcopal Diocese
of Vermont

2005 – 2010

A Summary

Formation

Liberation

Communication

Connection

Celebration

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A Strategic Plan for Growth and Ministry

The Episcopal Diocese of Vermont 2005 – 2010

Dear Companions in Ministry,

On September 11, 2004, the Diocesan Council unanimously approved *A Strategic Plan for Growth and Ministry: The Episcopal Diocese of Vermont, 2005-2010*. This vision and plan will help guide the mission and ministry of our Diocese for the next five years in response to our diocesan mission statement to “Pray the Prayer of Christ, Learn the Mind of Christ and Do the Deeds of Christ.”

The development of this strategic plan involved over 340 individuals and 46 congregations, and my deepest appreciation goes out to all who were part of this effort. What the Diocesan Council offers here is a vision for our future in response to the thinking, hopes and dreams of Episcopalians throughout Vermont. We affirm the many ways the spirit of God is already at work in the ministries of the congregations, related organizations, clergy, laity, and leadership of the Diocese of Vermont. Excellent ministries that are currently part of our common life will continue. The plan outlined in this Summary, and available in more detail in the full Strategic Plan for the Diocese of Vermont, will enhance, and in some cases add new elements, to those ministries.

As your bishop, I invite all Vermont Episcopalians to share in this vision and strategic plan for our common life and mission as the Episcopal Diocese of Vermont. This is an invitation to make this **our** vision and plan for the future. This is an invitation for you to stake your claim in the ownership and stewardship of this vision and plan for a lively, mission-oriented diocese.

Fully living into the Baptismal Covenant and our various baptismal ministries, both as the church gathered and as the church dispersed in our daily life, is the guiding principle of this vision and plan. This is a living document. It grows out of the conversations we have had, and it anticipates new and emerging possibilities that have yet to be articulated. The last chapter of this strategic plan has yet to be written. It will come about as we live with and into the hopes, dreams and possibilities contained in this report. I commend it to you and look forward to the work before us in shaping and bringing this vision and plan to fuller bloom.

Faithfully,

+Thomas C. Ely

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 of 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 gives 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.

The action plan summarized in the following pages 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.

The Diocesan Council is firmly committed to leading the implementation of this plan by working with committee chairs and others responsible for particular ministries. The 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.*

The Action Plan

Christian Education & Youth Ministry

See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are.

1 John 3:1

Christian formation is a life-long process that encompasses not only what we learn, but also how we live out our understanding of God's call to us. With this focus in mind, we will:

- ❖ develop effective training programs for Christian Formation in all parishes;
- ❖ develop a training and certification institute that will promote and recognize leadership for catechists, teachers of children, youth and adults in the church and society;
- ❖ strengthen the dissemination of the Diocesan Resource Center materials through increased use of technology, web site communication, storage capacity and regional access to materials;
- ❖ strengthen our youth ministry to include: leadership development opportunities for youth; the development of a regional network of youth leaders; and greater use of communication and technology tools;
- ❖ increase participation at Rock Point Summer Conferences;
- ❖ reinvigorate Sunday School programs and develop regional networks that spiritually nurture those who serve children and families.

Parish Life & Spiritual Growth Ministry

First take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbor's eye.

Matthew 7:5

Recognizing the desire for increased opportunities for lay education and spiritual growth, we will:

- ❖ increase diocesan support for, and local participation in, educational programs such

as the Diocesan Study Program and Education for Ministry;

- ❖ assist local churches with resources for training and curriculum development to recognize, equip and affirm baptismal vocations;
- ❖ carry out the recommendations of those working on the spiritual direction grant to implement and support training, supervision and availability of spiritual directors throughout the diocese;
- ❖ support the efforts of the Christian Meditation Center of the Cathedral Chapter to provide training and support for meditation groups in congregations throughout the state.

Outreach & Social Justice Ministry

Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.

Mark 3:35

In a commitment to live fully into the vows of our Baptismal Covenant, we will put our faith into action, using that power to transform our communities into places where people's most basic human needs are met and where the dignity of every person is honored and respected. We will:

- ❖ commit to a new level of social justice throughout the Diocese by inviting additional congregations to become involved with Vermont Interfaith Action;
- ❖ promote the development of at least one outreach program in each congregation and encourage interfaith outreach collaboration;
- ❖ assist additional congregations to become recognized by the Episcopal Church as Jubilee Centers;
- ❖ assist every church in the Diocese to strengthen or implement an international social justice ministry;
- ❖ enhance awareness of racism by providing trainings in anti-racism for diocesan clergy and identified lay leadership.

Communication Ministry

Is a lamp brought in to be put under the bushel basket, or under the bed, and not on the lampstand?
Mark 4:21

Clear and open communication is essential to the health of all areas of ministry. In addition to improving existing tools of communication such as the Mountain Echo and Simple Gifts, we will:

- ❖ maintain and keep up-to-date a user-friendly web site for the diocese;
- ❖ utilize all available media to communicate the good news of our ministries to the larger community by participating in a national advertising campaign, by offering workshops to aid congregations in publicizing their own activities, and by taking advantage of opportunities to place news stories.
- ❖ offer opportunities for all congregations to gain access to electronic communication and have a presence on the World Wide Web;
- ❖ work to increase the use and effectiveness of email lists and list serves for various specialized ministries;
- ❖ create a diocesan brochure that can be distributed through state welcome centers and used by deaneries and congregations;

Organizational, Structural & Financial Ministries

But he answered them, "You give them something to eat."
Mark 6:36

Reflecting a deep concern for stewardship and for the inclusion of all Episcopalians in the life and ministry of the Diocese, we will:

- ❖ implement a comprehensive financial stewardship strategy including education, general giving, planned giving, and if indicated, a capital campaign;
- ❖ enhance interdependency and interconnectedness utilizing Baptismal Ministry as the central diocesan organizing principle, celebrating the ministry of all the baptized;
- ❖ examine parish assessment policies and the effectiveness and consistency of implementation and consider alternatives such as the Newark 50-50 plan and the Diocese of Wyoming strategy.

Parish to Parish & Parish to Diocese Ministry

Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed.
Hebrews 12:12

As Episcopalians and Anglicans, we and our congregations stand not alone but as participants in a web of connectedness. To enrich our connections we will:

- ❖ address the need for a closer relationship between parishes and the leadership of the Diocese;
- ❖ use visitations by the Bishop and the Ministry Development Team to achieve an increased presence in congregations throughout the Diocese;
- ❖ present goals and budgets at deanery meetings and make this information available on the diocesan website.

Rock Point

O come let us sing to the Lord: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation! Psalm 95:1

Throughout the gathering of diocesan ideas and concerns from local congregations, Rock Point consistently surfaced as a natural resource that is one of our greatest treasures. In order to support and enhance that gift, we will:

- ❖ develop a land use management plan that:
a) identifies the best uses for various parts of the property; b) outlines procedures for management of sensitive ecological systems; and c) enhances the connections with adjacent and nearby properties and supports the conservation goals of area community entities;
- ❖ expand Rock Point's ministry as a spiritual life center as well as incorporate collaborative opportunities with resources such as the Cathedral's Center for Christian Meditation and other models of spiritual direction and/or monastic communities;
- ❖ develop a pilot program for ecological education for Burlington's Old and New North End children in cooperation with regional strategic partners and educational/ecological resources;
- ❖ develop a cooperative plan with strategic local partners for constructively sharing the natural resource of Rock Point with the larger community through controlled public access;
- ❖ build a youth program/educational facility to house Rock Point Summer Conferences, Diocesan Youth Committee activities and other current and future programs to complement the Bishop Booth Conference Center;
- ❖ maintain the current Rock Point facilities in good working order through a maintenance plan that identifies prioritized needs and establishes a capital maintenance fund to fulfill the ongoing maintenance of existing and future facilities.

Implementation

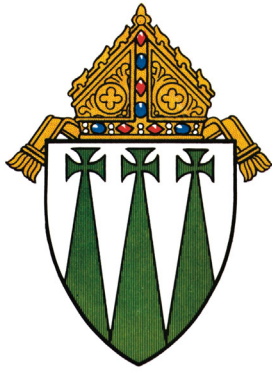
This Strategic Plan for Growth and Ministry will serve as a guide to Diocesan Council in setting priorities and developing annual budgets.

As we implement our vision that reflects the hopes, wishes and dreams of Episcopalians in Vermont, we will periodically revise and update it to include new and exciting initiatives that are emerging—for example, the Environmental Social Justice Ministry, and new initiatives of the Commission on Ministry.

In addition to this Summary, an eight page matrix provides greater detail, and the complete plan outlines specific action steps, measurable outcomes and cost estimates. Both are available on request from the Diocesan Office and online at www.dioceseofvermont.org.

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