

The Report of the Long Range Planning Committee

Preamble

We live and do ministry in a diocese of incredible beauty. We enjoy pristine lakes, the highest mountain in the commonwealth, and numerous state and national parks. Yet this beauty comes with a price and that involves communication. For many parts of the diocese, a cell phone is best used as a paper weight. The heights and depths of our diocese do not lend themselves to easy gatherings of our diocesan family. Many must travel 2-3 hours or more to attend a meeting at Evans House. There is no central part of our diocese that is accessible for all within easy traveling distances. For the most part, we gather once a year for Council, greet each other, renew relationships, do our business, and return to our homes for another year.

The chief unit within the Episcopal Church is the diocese, and in our diocese our bishop is tasked with the role of chief communicator. Churches are classified, based on average Sunday attendance, as either family, pastoral, program, or corporate. Each size functions differently. In essence our diocese functions in a way that is similar to that of a pastoral-sized church in that the bishop is the center of our life together. It is he who presents the vision for the diocese; it is his staff that interacts with the other members of the diocese; but above all this model depends heavily on good communication. Separated by the distances that characterize our diocese, by the immensity of the geographical area that our diocese encompasses, we are to be commended for functioning as well as we do.

Within a pastoral-sized church, the leadership is predominantly pastoral because there are so many relationships to watch over. In this large family that is our diocese, so separated by distance, it is mainly our bishop who is aware of the lives of the family members (churches). The power and effectiveness of his office depends largely on good communication that goes both ways.

The bishop's vision for our diocese has not changed. It remains a seamless ministry of healthy and wholesome congregations and clergy, strengthened to carry out the promises we make at baptism to serve the world in the name of the risen Christ. However, it is difficult to measure whether we have accomplished this vision or not. The Mutual Ministry Review (MMR), adopted at the August meeting of the Executive Board, hopes to expand the dialogue that has begun. It is attached to this report.

The Long Range Planning Committee sought to strengthen those areas of what we do best, to seek ways to enhance those goals we want to accomplish, and to pay particular attention to the stresses within our system and how best to reduce them while remembering that conflict is a normative part of life. We will always have conflict, but we can reduce it to a more manageable size.

We offer six areas of long range plans for your consideration. The overall focus of the plan is to grow our strengths, as noted in the MMR, by augmenting the structures that are in place—convocations, deans and presidents, and staff. We believe that good communication builds trust and that with trust comes good stewardship--which then provides us with the ability to meet the challenges of our bishop's vision for the diocese. We propose the following to enable us to do all that our Lord has called us to do together as this Diocese of Southwestern Virginia.

Faithfully,

Members of the Long Range Planning Committee

The Rev. Richard Fife
Kate Garcia
The Rev. Connie Jackson
The Rev. Marion Kanour
Harriet Meinecke
Nick Moga

Bob Pohlada
The Rev. Phyllis Spiegel
Glenn Updike
The Rev. Craig Wylie
The Rev. Doug Wigner

1. Arlin J. Rothauge, *Sizing up a Congregation* (New York: The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Episcopal Church, 1995), 15-21.

Long Range Plan

The mission of the Diocese of Southwestern Virginia is to support and challenge the creativity of our congregations in Christian growth and global responsibility. (Journal of the Diocese of Southwestern Virginia, 1989)

Our bishop's vision for this diocese is of congregations and clergy operating seamlessly across all age groups in healthy and wholesome ways, shaping our life together in prayer to serve the world in the name of the risen Christ.

Our mission statement, the bishop's vision, and the collated responses available from the 2007 Mutual Ministry Review (see appendix) come together in the following Long Range Plan for the next five years.

It is our intent that implementation of this plan will grow the health, wholesomeness, and teamwork of the congregations, people, and clergy of the diocese to serve the world in the name of the risen Christ.

Goals

**Grow our diocesan strengths (as identified in the Mutual Ministry Review):
hospitality, outreach, worship, staff, and youth.**

**Enhance the structure of convocations to increase interaction among parishes,
clergy, lay leadership, and diocesan staff.**

**Enhance and clarify the role of Deans and Presidents, both within their
convocations and in the wider diocese, to better use their gifts, talents, and
presence.**

**Enhance and clarify the role of diocesan staff members to best use their gifts,
talents, and presence.**

**Strengthen areas of communication between bishop, clergy, lay leadership, and
parishioners to increase our ability to engage in mission and ministry.**

**Enhance and strengthen trust in order to better meet the challenges of our
Bishop's vision for the diocese.**

Appendix I: Action Plan

A. Diocesan Strengths: Grow our strengths (as identified in the Mutual Ministry Review): hospitality, outreach, worship, staff, and youth.

1. Evans House staff will continue Wardens', Treasurers', Planned Giving Coordinators', Parish Staff Musicians', Volunteers', Clergy, and Secretaries' Days, enhancing communication and hospitality in innovative and creative ways. Those attending are encouraged to report back to their vestries and parishioners, sharing resources and information.
2. Continue the current diocesan activities for youth while increasing support and planning at the convocational level. Parishes are encouraged to identify youth leader contacts with whom the Youth Coordinator can plan. Names will be reported annually through the Parish Officers' Report form.
3. The Executive Board will continue to find ways to establish financial stability and growth in the diocese. Parishes are challenged to share in funding the mission and ministry of our diocese according to guidelines adopted by the 88th Annual Council in Resolution 9. The Executive Board will continue leading the diocese toward better dialogue over financial issues and other related areas.
4. Continue support for these and other institutional ministries: Boys' Home, Grace House, Phoebe Needles, Stuart Hall, Episcopal Appalachian Ministries, Bishop Marmion Resource Center, Virginia Episcopal School, Westminster-Canterbury of Lynchburg, Inc., Jackson-Feild Homes Foundation, Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy, and Episcopal Relief and Development.
 - a. *By 2009* – Encourage parishes to learn more about the mission and ministry of Phoebe Needles. Each congregation and convocation commit to utilizing The Phoebe Needles Center for at least one program (vestry, men's, women's, youth, choir, etc. retreat, parish weekend, or other overnight gatherings) at least once every three years. Parishes work to publicize and send participants to retreats, programs, and adult and youth Summer Camp.
 - b. *By 2009* – Grace House is a visible Episcopal mission ministry in an area where most members of our diocese never travel. From June through August the House provides an educational base for Appalachian ministry and study programs to people all around the United States. Travel in the mountains in December and January is tricky due to the weather; however, during the rest of the year space is also available for retreats, Habitat-like work weekends, or as a base for enjoying the real mountains of Virginia. A recently built guest house is available for visitors who want to spend quiet time deep in the mountains of Southwestern Virginia. In the next five years the Grace House board would like to see increased financial support for this historic ministry and to have more people visit the site, participating in the ministries supported through Grace House when possible.
5. Continue support for Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), maintaining them as a line item in the diocesan budget and encouraging their inclusion in parish budgets, in accordance with Resolution 5 passed by the 87th Annual Council. Continually task the MDG Committee to offer ways that the diocese, parishes, and individuals can participate in and accomplish these goals. Task the committee to keep these goals in the forefront of the life of our diocese in ways such as encouraging diocesan groups to participate in mission opportunities abroad.
6. Continue the annual St. Nicholas Day Appeal to fund mission and ministry, alternating between projects within the diocese and projects outside the diocese.

B. Convocational Structure: Enhance the structure of convocations to increase interaction among parishes, clergy, lay leadership, and diocesan staff.

1. Beginning 2008 – Encourage convocational worship services; if feasible, plan them in conjunction with the Bishop's week (see E.1 below). The services should reflect the personality of each convocation. No convocation's services need to conform to those of other convocations.
2. Beginning 2008 – Youth Coordinator will work with identified convocational youth leaders to plan an annual youth event in each convocation to strengthen and encourage the participation of youth.

- Utilize Grace House and Phoebe Needles whenever possible for youth retreats, meetings, and functions. Parishes are encouraged to support their youth in attending these functions.

3. By 2009 – Deans plan and share diocesan-wide preaching, utilizing people from our companion dioceses as opportunities arise. Parishes are encouraged to communicate with their Deans about such sharing opportunities.

C. Convocational Leadership: Enhance and clarify the role of Deans and Presidents both within their convocations and in the wider diocese to better use their gifts, talents, and presence.

1. Beginning 2008 – Deans and Presidents process at Council Eucharists.

2. Beginning 2008 – Deans use and be addressed by the title “The Very Reverend” during their tenures.

3. Beginning 2008 – Bishop and Deans meet monthly (by conference call or in person), including pertinent staff as necessary.

4. Continuing February 2008 – Bishop will review his expectations of the roles of Deans and Presidents with them annually.

D. Diocesan Staff: Enhance and clarify the role of diocesan staff members to best use their gifts, talents, and presence.

1. By June 2008, the Bishop will evaluate the feasibility of appointing a Canon to the Ordinary (clergy) or an Executive Assistant to the bishop (lay) to allow for a more direct link between the Bishop, parishes, clergy, and lay leadership. (This change might require reorganization of diocesan staff and clarification of roles, which might or might not require additional funds). If there is a widespread call for a Canon to the Ordinary, the Executive Board will explore ways to raise the necessary funds for the full-time position.

2. Continuing 2008 and beyond – In communication tools such as the monthly pew bulletin, ensure that resources are identified, pictures of staff appear if appropriate, and names, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses of support contacts are given.

E. Communication: Strengthen areas of communication between bishop, clergy, lay leadership, and parishioners to increase our ability to engage in mission and ministry.

1. Beginning 2008 – Bishop will spend several days in each convocation annually. Deans will work with parishes to plan events, housing, office space, and worship opportunities to include convocation confirmation services.

2. Beginning 2008 – Clarify and increase diocesan awareness of the mission and opportunities associated with Higher Education Ministries.

3. Beginning 2008 – Clarify and increase diocesan awareness of the mission and opportunities associated with Program Grants.

4. Continuing in 2008 – The Friday email check-in with diocesan clergy is an excellent idea. We encourage the Bishop to continue this.

5. In 2008 – Ask the Executive Board to explore the possibility of obtaining a video conferencing system that would allow those members most distant from Evans House to participate in meetings. The system would be placed at Evans House and initially in the Abingdon and Augusta convocations. Executive Board would include the cost of the system in future budgets.

6. By 2009 – Bishop tasks Executive Board to create and implement a plan in which the diocese will have two conflict resolution teams in place to assist the Bishop in addressing issues of conflict in a timely manner. The teams would be able to work with clergy and their parishes to determine the level

of conflict, if it is something the team could assist the parish to resolve, or if it is necessary for the Bishop to step in.

7. Council delegates are reminded of their responsibility to report back to their congregations following Council.

8. The Bishop and the Executive Board are asked to revisit the mission statement and, if necessary, draft a new mission statement incorporating the Bishop's vision for the diocese.

F. Pastoral Relations: Enhance and strengthen trust in order to better meet the challenges of our Bishop's vision for the diocese.

1. Beginning 2008 – Bishop and clergy meet annually with an outside resource person to facilitate discussion and strengthen relationships. This meeting will be jointly planned by the Bishop and the Deans, and will be in addition to the Clergy Days already being held.

2. Beginning 2008 – In a similar way, Bishop and staff continue to meet with an outside resource person annually for staff development.

3. Beginning 2008 – Bishop tasks a committee comprised of the diocesan Transitions Officer and two members of the Executive Board to create a plan for regular celebration of the Eucharist in parishes without the ability to pay for clergy, this plan to be in place by 2009.

4. Continuing in 2008 – Continue a fourteen-month parish visitation schedule and, if possible, strive for annual visitations. Parishes are encouraged to plan with the Bishop or his secretary regarding vestry meetings, Sunday School classes, or other activities in which they would like him to take part while he is there.

5. Continuing in 2008 – Bishop tasks the Executive Board to continue setting aside funding for the election of our next bishop. Over the past ten years, a bit more than half of the estimated \$150,000 cost of this process has been saved; the remainder needs to be saved over the next 5 to 7 years to facilitate that transition process.

Appendix II: The Report of the Mutual Ministry Review (August 9, 2007)

Preface

The Mutual Ministry Review Committee is honored to provide this snapshot of the diocese. We took this challenge with an original timeline of response by January 2007. It became apparent during a Clergy Day in the fall of 2006, that this timeline was unrealistic and a decision was made by the chair of the Mutual Ministry Review Committee and the Bishop to extend our self-assessment to a target date of Easter Sunday April 8, 2007. The rationale for this decision was that Lent, being a time of self assessment, might be a good time to prayerfully assess our common life.

On April 9, 2007, we had a total of 26 respondents out of a possible 57 parishes, 5 convocation clergy groups, and the Executive Board. During a May meeting, members of the Executive Board were given an update on the self-assessment process. In response, the President of each convocation was charged with contacting parishes that had not responded. A new target date of July 1, 2007, was established.

We are happy to report that a total of 39 parishes, 4 convocation clergy groups, and the Executive Board provided data for this report. It is important to note that our diocesan website lists 57 parishes in our diocese but we did not expect participation, due to various circumstances, from 6-8 parishes. The honesty of the responses, we believe, accurately reflects the mood of the parishes in our diocese and is important as a guide to future conversation, reflection, and action.

Our committee operated as much as possible over the internet. The demands of driving long distances to participate were therefore diminished by utilizing this powerful tool.

Each parish, clergy group, and the Executive Board was counted as one respondent. Our total respondent pool was 44. A large percentage of respondents engaged the process utilizing the appreciative inquiry assessment tool as presented. A small percentage, for their own stated reasons, chose to respond in a different format, but they did respond.

We as a committee are grateful for the honest engagement by all respondents in this self-assessment process. All responses are absolutely confidential. Our prayer is that the data contained in this report will expand the dialogue we have begun with all of our sisters and brothers, from the bishop to the smallest parish in the farthest corner of the geographic boundaries of our diocese.

Results

What is? Appreciating what we do well.

Major strength areas identified by the data include:

- Outreach: locally, nationally, and internationally
- Worship.
- Youth ministries especially our diocesan opportunities.
- The staff of Evans House is greatly appreciated, especially annual council and working with a small number of volunteer and paid staff.
- Our institutional ministries at Boys' Home--Covington, Phoebe Needles, and Grace House.

What might be?

We envision and see as possible:

- We desire a clear vision for the diocese that we can support not only with our funds but with our hands.
- Growth in numbers in our parishes.
- Financial stability for our parishes and our diocese.
- More diocesan-wide engagement with parish-to-parish communication and study offered on a regular basis, so that we may be useful to one another.
- We desire a system for conflict management/resolution that is clearly defined and accessible to all who are in need of this service.

What else? Dialogue

One area was clearly identified for more dialogue:

- It is clear that we desire more two-way communication with our bishop.

We wish the communication to be a free-flowing and open system between the people of the diocese and the bishop. We hope the bishop would play a proactive role in this intentional dialogue. We desire a regular and frequent schedule for reviews.

Where's the rub? Stress

While many areas of stress were identified by the respondents, we can capture the essence of our stress within the system as:

- Our system currently lacks a process or system within which we can express our frustrations/concerns in a transparently open format, and expect an engaged, concerned, loving response.

Members of the Mutual Ministry Review Committee

Cal de Coligny

Gay Eure

The Rev. Richard Fife

Kate Garcia

John Hall

Bill Kennan

The Rev. Connie Jackson

Frances Marshall

The Rev. Kim Webster