

THE NEBRASKA PLAN
for
MINISTRY DEVELOPMENT

OVERVIEW
of

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PURPOSE

The Nebraska Plan for Ministry Development is an education approach to the formation and training of lay and locally ordained ministry in the Diocese of Nebraska. **Education and formation for ministry involve four areas: knowledge, attitude, identity, and skill.** The Nebraska Plan attends to those four areas through five associated educational components to develop, train, and support men and women for ministry. The components of Gifts Discovery and Congregational Study contribute to forming knowledge and attitude. The Training Processes and the Retreats and Seminars components work in all four areas of knowledge, attitude, identity, and some skill. The Discernment and Call component forms knowledge, identity, and attitude.

Ministries included in the educational approach of this plan are those which people offer in their daily lives and those traditionally considered church-related ministries: licensed lay ministries, locally ordained ministries, and volunteer or elected ministries of a congregation.

The desired results are:

- education and training that supports the daily ministry of all Episcopalians in Nebraska;
- education and training for increased licensed and locally ordained ministries in Nebraska Episcopal congregations, particularly those in cluster configurations; a stronger Episcopal Church in Nebraska.

CONTEXT

Bishop James Krotz, the Commission on Ministry's Total Ministry Committee, cluster missionaries, and others in and beyond the Nebraska diocese have drawn on the wisdom and experience of the church to formulate and propose this plan for ministry development.

The Episcopal Diocese of Nebraska, using a plan for ministry development, can form even more spiritually mature Christians who know how to serve the world in Christ's name.

The Nebraska Plan for Ministry Development supports:

- people desiring to further develop the “spiritual muscle” necessary in their daily Christian ministries at home, in friendships, and in professional and volunteer vocations.
- people who offer ministry which strengthens the Episcopal Church's organizational life.

A living faith community in the Episcopal tradition provides a place for the worship, education, and mutual support necessary to continue Christ's ministry in all areas of a person's life. Whenever possible, each Episcopal congregation will have active ministries of priest, deacon, catechist (prepares others for baptism and confirmation), preaching, lay officiating of daily and pastoral offices, eucharistic ministers, and other necessary elected and volunteer ministries.

EDUCATION COMPONENTS

I. Discovering Gifts for Ministry

A series of six sessions; open to all members of a congregation.

II. Retreats and Seminars

These retreats or seminars might be diocesan, regional, or local events to support daily ministries and church-related ministries of the laity.

Examples: a retreat of prayer and support for laity who own small businesses; a retreat for those in the ranching or farming industries; a retreat for parents of young children; a workshop for vestry or bishop's committee members; training in pastoral care, and so forth.

III. Congregational Study Sessions

Open to all members of a congregation. A series of four study units, each eight sessions in length. Subjects are Theology, Church History, Scripture, and Liturgics -- each subject has a limited focus. For example, Theology will focus on the Nicene and Apostles' creeds.

IV. Congregational Discernment and Call Process

A process to identify people for any ministries in a congregation. Contact the Bishop before initiating this process. This process is required prior to calling any persons for licensed lay ministries, or for locally ordained ministries of priest (sacramentalist) or deacon. Gifts discovery and congregational study to have been entered into prior to discernment and call.

Components I - IV are open to anyone who desires to deepen his or her knowledge of Christian ministry. Anyone entering Component V, Ministry Training and Credentialing, will be required to have participated in I, Discovering Gifts for Ministry; III, Congregational Study; and IV, Discernment and Call Process.

V. Ministry Training and Credentialing Processes

Training is required for the licensed and locally ordained ministries: preacher, catechist, deacon, priest (sacramentalist), lay officiant at Daily Offices and Eucharistic minister. Candidates for license or ordination meet on a regional or diocesan basis for a length of time specified for each ministry (see Training Section). Training will be led by lay and clergy

members of the Diocese of Nebraska.

I. DISCOVERING GIFTS FOR MINISTRY

The gifts discovery process particularly helps form one's knowledge and identity. Knowledge of one's gifts increases one's awareness of where and how to offer those gifts in Christ's ministry. A growing sense of gifts and ministry contributes to a sense of Christian identity.

The Nebraska Plan for Ministry Development provides a *Discovering Gifts for Ministry* leader's guide of six sessions for any congregation to use. The *Discovering Gifts for Ministry* series requires the leadership of someone in the local congregation who has the skills and desire to facilitate the process.

If a congregation has already done gifts discovery work, the people may elect not to use this series, or may want to add the series to their previous discovery process. Other gifts discovery processes may be used in place of the one provided.

Each group selects a meeting schedule best suited to its situation, i.e. weekly meetings, bi-weekly meetings, and so forth.

The guide is a complete outline for the leader. *Discovering Gifts for Ministry* is the initial work of identifying each person's gifts for ongoing or new ministry.

Ministries considered include those in the family, employment, volunteer work in the community or the congregation, and/or licensed or ordained ministries of the Episcopal Church.

See the *Discovering Gifts for Ministry* Leader's Guide for more complete information.

II. RETREATS AND SEMINARS

The Nebraska Plan for Ministry Development includes training and workshops that support lay people in the wide variety of their lay vocations. **The retreats and seminars relate to all four areas of Christian formation: knowledge, identity, attitude, and skill.** Area retreats or seminars are intentional support of the laity who leave the altar rail on Sundays and go to homes, jobs, or volunteer work the rest of the week. The Church has wisdom to impart. These events could be one more way to access that wisdom and grace.

Cost and location are important considerations in planning any of these events. People within a congregation or local vicinity with skills for leading particular workshops could be used. There is a stated preference for the events to be only one day in length whenever possible and as local as possible.

Examples:

A weekend devoted to those who work in medical professions, or who own small businesses, or are teachers, administrators, ranchers, farmers, and so forth. People with similar occupational interests could come together for reflection, Bible study, support and enjoyment. Their common concerns and challenges could be discussed and prayed about in light of Christian teaching and tradition.

Repeated day-long, or longer, seminars on listening, grief recovery, healing, prayer, compassion, support for adults with ailing parents, and so on. The possibilities are limited only by our imagination -- and people who will lead these events.

Seminars that focus on issues of today's society could be offered, i.e., adult literacy, interracial relationships, interfaith connections, poverty and its effects, issues of farming or ranching, or numerous other areas. Consideration of how ministry occurs in response to those issues.

Other possibilities: a vestry/bishop's committee training weekend; a retreat or seminar/workshop for altar guild members; a choir weekend; weekends for any of a congregation's community life ministries.

III. CONGREGATIONAL STUDY

The Congregational Study and the *Discovering Gifts for Ministry* series are the heart of the education resources for ministry development. **The study promotes formation in the areas of knowledge and attitude. Some formation in Christian identity also occurs.** The Congregational Study offers 32 sessions divided into four subject areas of eight sessions each: Church History, Theology, Liturgics, and Scripture.

The four subjects may be studied in any order. Each person selects the subject area to study; therefore, all four subjects could be studied simultaneously by various people during any eight session cycle. Each subject will have a specific focus, e.g., Theology will focus on the Nicene and Apostles' Creeds.

The Study Sessions are open to anyone interested in study and reflection with others. Groups decide on the most sensible meeting schedule for themselves. The complete study series is required for those who enter the ministry credentialing process for preaching, catechist, priest, and so forth.

An outline of reflection/discussion questions, and suggested resources/reading will be provided for each subject.

It will be necessary for someone in the congregation to serve as facilitator for the group's meetings. A brief facilitator's guide accompanies the Congregational Study Sessions. The facilitator will convene the meetings, implement the discussion outline, and keep track of the meeting time. Though the facilitator will not teach—the suggested resources study are the “teacher”—it might be helpful for this person to have some background in the study subjects.

Discernment of gifts and ministries will continue throughout the Congregational Study Sessions, and will involve all members of the congregation who are participating in the Congregational Study.

Additional aspects of the study series:

1. Discovery of and commitment to all ministry will be supported and encouraged: ministries in daily life as well as those necessary for congregational life (music, Sunday School teaching, altar guild, hospitality, and so forth).
2. Leadership of the study discussion sessions can rotate among members of the group. Leadership will require facilitation of a prepared session outline.
3. Provides information and practice related to group dynamics and relationships.

The study series can be used by any Nebraska congregation for adult Christian education. Participation in *Discovering Gifts for Ministry* is not a prerequisite.

IV. CONGREGATIONAL DISCERNMENT AND CALL PROCESS

As much of the congregation as possible participates in these sessions. This process contributes to the formation of knowledge, identity, and attitude. **Contact with the diocesan Bishop and Commission Ministry, and recommendation to proceed, must occur before initiating this process.**

Five to six sessions that help a congregation determine whom to call for ministries offered in the local church and in the larger community.

This is a process to:

- 1) identify men and women with gifts for all ministries needed in a congregation.
- 2) confirm a call of men and women to volunteer ministries needed in a congregation, such as stewardship, education, youth, music, outreach, pastoral care, and so forth.
- 3) confirm a call of men and women to any of the licensed or locally ordained ministries,

General outline: 5 - 6 meetings. Could be weekly, or over a longer period. See **Discernment and Call** section for more complete description.

Session 1: A workshop/seminar offered by a person with knowledge of group process and skill in presenting a workshop on group dynamics and process. Purpose: a) to strengthen a congregation's ability to work together in this crucial circumstance; and b) to help those participating in the Discernment and Call Process to prepare for Sessions 2 and 3.

Session 2: A session on the meaning and responsibility of discernment. Also, the group identifies what they would like to learn or have assistance regarding their group dynamics. The person who led the group process seminar will attend Session 3 to offer feedback on what the group would like to learn.

Session 3: Discuss the various ministry possibilities for this congregation.

Session 4: Group identifies persons they desire to call for and support in any ministries offered in or through the local congregation. The group may be able to discern and call at this session, or may prefer time for further prayer before the actual confirmation of call into any ministries. Calls would be by secret ballot to be tallied and announced by the diocesan bishop or his designated representative.

Session 5: If the group elected to wait after Session 4 before naming persons for any ministries, this session is the time to issue the calls.

Session 6: A liturgical celebration of all ministries named and people who accepted

calls.

V. TRAINING AND CREDENTIALING PROCESSES for LICENSED and LOCALLY ORDAINED MINISTRIES

The Training Processes of the Nebraska Plan for Ministry Development form men and women in knowledge, identity, attitude, and skill related to the licensed and locally ordained ministries. Licensed and locally ordained ministries requiring the training and credentialing processes are those described in The Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church (2000), Title III, Canon 3 (Of Licensed Lay Persons) and Title III, Canon 9 (Of the Ordination of Local Priests and Deacons). The licensed and/or ordained ministries available these canons are: **a)** priests, **b)** deacons, **c)** preachers, **d)** catechists (teachers who prepare people for baptism and confirmation, **e)** eucharistic ministers who administer the Eucharist to homebound members of the congregation, and **f)** lay readers as officiants at the Daily Offices. The following expectations apply to the preceding ministries:

- + Each local congregation discerns who among them to call for any or all of the above-named ministries.
- + Those called to these congregational leadership ministries must have participated in the *Discovering Gifts for Ministry* series, or some comparable gifts discernment sessions.
- + Those called to these ministries must be (or have been) part of the 32-session Congregational Study cycle.
- + Those called to the congregational leadership ministries may accept or decline.
- + After licensing or ordination, each person follows a program of continuing education, primarily in the ongoing congregational study and support.

See the following outline of the training processes for more detail.

V. MINISTRY TRAINING AND CREDENTIALING PROCESSES

The following identify general training processes for diocesan credentials for licensed or locally ordained ministries:

Catechist	Preacher	Priest (Sacramentalist)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Attend three diocesan or regional meetings for training in catechetical methods and styles. + Practice teach a baptismal or confirmation preparation, and receive feedback. + Be recommended by the congregation for a license. + Licensed by the bishop. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Attend three diocesan or regional meetings to focus on preaching skills. + Preach six times in the local congregation and receive feedback. + Be recommended by the congregation for a license. + Licensed by the bishop. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Attend six diocesan or regional meetings to focus on sacramental ministry and practice. + Meet the canonical requirements for postulancy, candidacy and transitional diaconate, be recommended for each of them plus priesthood by the congregation. + Be approved by the diocesan Standing Committee for the transitional diaconate and priesthood. + Meet other standards as designated by the canons and diocesan requirements. + Licensed and ordained by the bishop.
Deacon	Eucharistic Minister	Reader
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Attend six diocesan or regional meetings to focus on servant ministry. + Meet canonical requirements for postulancy and candidacy and be recommended by the congregation. + Be approved by the diocesan Standing Committee for ordination to the diaconate. + Licensed and ordained by the bishop. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Attend one diocesan or regional meeting to learn and practice the order of the Eucharist used in this ministry. + Be recommended by the congregation for a license. + Licensed by the bishop. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Attend four diocesan or regional meetings to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Learn and practice good techniques for reading Scripture lessons aloud. 2. Learn about the offices at which readers may officiate. 3. Practice leading one or more of the offices. +Be recommended by the congregation for licensing. +Licensed by the bishop.