

Building the Answers

Rest, Relationships, and Renewal

Episcopal Diocese of Missouri Clergy Conference
September 13-15, 2021

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Our Mission

*Walking humbly with God and our neighbor,
we seek justice, act with love, and live the Good News of Jesus.*

Our Vision

A world transformed by God's love, justice and peace.

"I didn't realize it before, but I found my place and it is putting structure together. Others had vision, where we were going to go, but I focused on the structure. I didn't know that about myself." The Rev. Shug Goodlow





Sometimes we find ourselves teetering on the edge of change.

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INTRODUCTION

The statement by the Rev. Shug Goodlow on the front of this report answers a lot of unasked question: how does the Episcopal Church, the Diocese of Missouri, help its people find their place in the Body of Christ? How does the diocese assist those who are willing to participate in this dynamic change offered in its strategic visioning plan, determine which of the gifts and talents will be used and further strengthened and which need to be developed? That is the challenge before the diocese as it makes its vision plan a reality, “A world transformed by God’s love, justice and peace.” It is truly a call to live into our baptism and to continue Jesus’ work, his work, if we are honest, that led to his crucifixion. Jesus upset folks and while it might be counterintuitive, and a world transformed by “God’s love, justice, and peace” will upset folks. That is the reality of any process that holds people accountable for continuing Jesus’ work of sharing, healing, and love. People inside and outside the church prefer an inequitable status quo.

How many people are committed to the mission and vision of the Diocese of Missouri, the strategic visioning process? There are eleven (11) goals and twenty-nine (29) initiatives. That is a huge commitment of time and effort beyond what many people believe to be the purpose of church, which is to help them get to heaven. There are some questions we might be afraid to ask because we are afraid of the possible answer and yet, we marshal on, propelled by the mission of Jesus to transform the world. Jesus announced that the reign of God, the kingdom of God, to some, is here, right now (Mt. 3:2). It is not some far off place, some far off time, that if we believe the sights and pictures that are being returned from millions, billions of light years away by the James Webb telescope, the heaven we have painted for ourselves, might exist only in our imaginations. “The Kingdom of God is at hand . . .” if we only have the will to make it so. In developing the new mission statement, the people of the diocese took inspiration from Micah 6:8:

*He has told you, O mortal, what is good;
and what does the Lord require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God.*

How do we make this a reality, in this life, in this generation, and not leave it, demand that future generations do what we are not willing? What if we could assist those in our pews and those who are looking for a pew to find themselves in this thing called church. That church could be a place where people could be who God has called them to be, a place where they could thrive and serve God, the creator of all there is, was, and will ever be. Throughout the pandemic, we heard ruminations of a new church that was to arise from the chaos that was COVID. This new church, this different church will only become reality when we make it so, understanding that for a lot of people who call themselves Episcopalians, what they left in March 2020 was all they wanted, to return to what was comfortable, what was known, what, in fact, was easy. Change causes discomfort and most people come to church to be comforted, to leave behind the problems of the world and to bring those problems to the church to be handled is not what church is supposed to be. However, if we are committed to following that Nazarene Jew, the radical Jesus who came to show us how to be human, we will find that we will disturb the peace, a peace that, unfortunately, just might be the absence of conflict for a brief time as opposed to that peace that surpasses all understanding, a peace that is shalom, where all God’s children have enough. To make the strategic visioning plan, the goals and objectives a reality, there will need to be a concerted effort to find and assist people who are committed to being church differently, who have the energy to be church differently.

When was the last time you did something silly, were not concerned with being embarrassed or seen by others? When was the last time you danced in the rain, like a child? When?

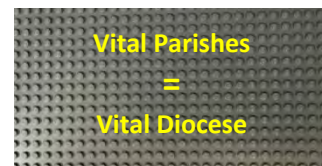
“And those who were seen dancing were thought to be insane by those who could not hear the music. --” Friedrich Nietzsche

To continue a process begun with the promulgation of the diocese’s strategic vision, forty-one clergy, to include Bishop Deon, came together to have fun, to rest, refresh, reconnect and deal with difficult issues. The goals of the session were:

To re-discover play and creativity in the work of the Church in the context of rest.

To provide the basis to continue moving the Diocese of Missouri through its strategic visioning plan and for it to become a reality for the *majority* of its lay and clergy members. *Why majority? Truth-telling is critical in this process, acknowledging that there are some (many?) who are fine with how the church is and resist any change and may act to sabotage any change that conflicts with their view of what church is to be.*

Ultimately, the quest is to have vital parishes (missions) that lead to a vital diocese. Parishes and a diocese that are realizing the mission God has called you to accomplish. In our LEGO Serious Play® sessions, the LEGO plate symbolized the foundation—a firm foundation (Mark 7:24-27) – upon which the mission is built and provides a visual representation that is sometimes difficult to imagine when words are on paper. However, none of this can be accomplished if people are tired and stressed.



SACRED REST

Rest is sacred. Even Jesus had to get away from all that was pressing in on him and he encouraged those working with him to also rest (Mark 6:31). We were tired and stressed before the COVID pandemic and everything about the pandemic added to frayed nerves, lack of restful sleep, and a general feeling of “I can’t.”

“In the fall of 2021 – after more than a year of the pandemic and in the wake of a contentious presidential election – former (Baptist) pastor Eric Atcheson was standing in line on a Saturday morning when he realized he had to change his life.”

Between dealing with the frustrations inherent with the job, the pandemic and political polarization, pastors are suffering from burnout.

How many would leave if they could afford it financially?

I was picking up biscuits for my wife and daughter for breakfast. While I was waiting for our order to be ready, even though it was my day off, I started having a panic attack. That was my body trying to communicate to my soul: This is not sustainable. That moment marked ‘the point of no return.’¹

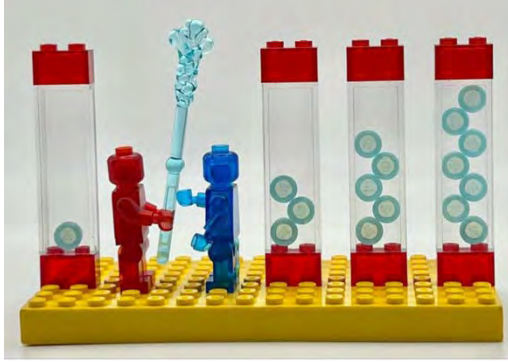
In a recent survey conducted by Barna, a Christian research organization, 42% of clergy who responded indicated they had seriously considered resigning from their ministries.² In this same survey, pastors who were under forty-five years old, nearly half considered quitting.³ The real question is: how many would leave if they were able to care for their families and pay the mortgage? How many are staying in tension-filled positions because they are not financially secure? Have we asked? Do we want to know?

All too many of us *wake up tired*. To alleviate this lack of rest, we follow the usual prescription, set a regular time to go to bed, make sure all electronics are turned off, have a dark and cool bedroom, no alcohol or food within four hours of retiring. We do all of that and more and still we wake up tired. Why?

¹ Mya Jaradat, Religious leaders struggle with burnout, depression and anxiety – just like the rest of America, *Deseret News*, May 12, 2022, <https://www.deseret.com/faith/2022/5/11/23058739/religious-leaders-struggle-with-burnout-depression-and-anxiety-pastor-mental-health-worker-shortage>.

² Scott Simon, Facing burnout, many faith leaders are leaving their ministries, NPR, September 3, 2022, <https://www.npr.org/2022/09/03/1120917859/facing-burnout-many-faith-leaders-are-leaving-their-ministries>.

³ Ian Lovett, Houses of Worship Face Clergy Shortage as Many Resign During Pandemic, *Wall Street Journal*, February 21, 2022, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/houses-of-worship-face-clergy-shortage-as-many-resign-during-pandemic-11645452000>.



Think of your body as a battery in which there are different cells. The battery will not work if the individual cells are not fully charged. Most of us, even before the pandemic, were running with depleted cells. Rest must be intentional to refill all the cells. Sabbaticals, especially those that require work and possibly a report upon return, and vacations, do not work. They don't work because, even if there is opportunity to replenish those

cells, upon return to the usual routines of our lives, we fail to carry over any methods used for intentional rest. It is not unusual to return from a vacation and need a vacation to recover from the vacation. Spa days, massages, and the like are time-bound, bound to the time during which the experience occurs. For rest to be sustained, it must be intentional and a part of every, single day.

*Sacred Rest—have you rested during this time of pandemic? How have you rested? “Just how **rested** are you?” Regardless of how well we think we perform, without rest, we are giving from an empty well.*

In her book, *Sacred Rest: Recover Your Life, Renew Your Energy, Restore Your Sanity*, physician Sandra Dalton-Smith, reminds us that rest does not always mean being still and that the cells of our bodies that need refilling are these:

- Physical
- Mental
- Emotional
- Spiritual
- Social
- Sensory
- Creative⁴

Our bodies will put us down when **physical rest** is needed and there are times when we have marathon sleep and still wake up tired. That is because one or more of the other cells is depleted. We can be mentally tired. The political scene is debilitating for some. Watching people who claim to follow Jesus attempt to take over the U.S. Capitol was more than some of us could bear. Those who have read the book or watched the Netflix series, *A Handmaid's Tale*, could see the beginnings of a takeover of this country that would set civil and human rights back hundreds of years. Hours and hours of news detailing the seeming destruction of democracy has been debilitating and then knowing that some who sit in our pews could support and might have participated of the January 2020 attempted coup can be too much. **Mental rest**, turning off the news, limiting social media, setting boundaries around which conversations we can and will not have would help to replenish that cell.

⁴ Sandra Dalton Smith, *Sacred Rest: Recover Your Life, Renew Your Energy, Restore Your Sanity*, (New York: Faith Works, 2017).

The pulls on our emotions – the deaths due to COVID, the deaths that are the result of gun violence where people seem to value weapons of human destruction more than human lives, members of our congregations asking why they couldn't have a funeral in the church during COVID, members insisting on communion the "real way" – bread and cup, those who refused to wear masks – all this pulled on our emotions. Add to this, our children struggling to learn in front of a screen, our own health or the health and care of our elderly parents, parents in nursing homes and not being able to visit. The list goes on and how did we handle the disruption. We are told to pray; however, many times those prayers seem to come back unanswered. **Emotional rest**, being able to set boundaries and being able to say, "no," for our own well-being is critical. Taking walks, running, stretching, long-warm baths, anything to re-focus, and lessen the pull on our emotions, because ministry pulls on your emotions. There are also plenty of people who love playing and pulling on our emotions and some even resort to the dig, "And what kind of priest are you?" if you fail to act in a manner satisfactorily to them. And there are times for our own mental health and rest, we need to say, even silently, "The kind that will put you on your behind." Clergy abuse is real.

What kind of priest are you?

The kind that will put you on your behind (in the name of Jesus).

How does it feel to be the only Black priest, priest of color, gay priest in the diocese? Does anyone care? Should anyone care?

How can a loving God permit "this" to happen? – with "this" being anything. "Where is God?" Regardless of how many courses we've taken in theodicy, if there is a loving God, why all the death, destruction, evil? And, as priests, to whom do we turn with our spiritual issues? Many clergy have spiritual directors, probably even more are in therapy. The fact that these services exist and are being used, and there seems to be no end in their use, the "therapies" is an indication that this battery cell needs constant replenishing. Are clergy to deal with this all on their own or should the Church provide resources and assistance, be intentional about seeing to the spiritual needs of those who are called to shepherd the flock. **Spiritual rest** is not a luxury, it is a necessity.

Lord, if you are willing, take this cup . . . Lk.22-42

"Love your enemies" (Mark 5:44). Our enemies can be loved; however, they don't have to be part of our lives. Toxic relationships, in and out of the church, need to be severed, cut off, if we are to replenish this cell. Too many clergy deal with people in their parishes whose sole goal in life is to cause havoc, to cause dissention in the parish and sabotage every plan that is put forth. Clergy are not asked to be martyrs, and again, being able to say "no," and set boundaries is critical to maintaining **social rest**, in addition to controlling our schedules. Zoom has created a nightmare because no travel is involved, we can just go from meeting to meeting. At some point, the answer must be "no."

Get behind me, Satan. Mt. 16-23

Even Jesus had to draw the line with one of his closest friends.

When was the last time the incense used in the liturgy was changed? When was the last time the vestments were cleaned? **Sensory rest** or change is important. We take the same route to

church. We see the same sights, smell the same smells, touch the same things, hear the same sounds? While many enjoy the service, for the priest, it can become work, a job that rarely changes. For some the rhythms, the sameness of the service provides comfort; for others it highlights monotony. To give our senses a rest, it is important to intentionally change the scenery so that the sights, smells, sounds, and feels differ. As we walk, without headphones, we listen to the sounds of nature. We sit on the beach and hear, sense, see, and hear the waves crashing on land. We feel the saltiness and sand on our feet. We take ourselves away and “see” what is in and under the water. We give ourselves a break from the everyday; we experience something different; we re-set, give ourselves a hard re-boot.⁵

Creative rest – again, when was the last time you danced in the rain? Released your inner child? LEGO Serious Play® forces people to tap into their creative side, to think with their hands. Clergy conferences can be fun, incorporate fun or they can be more of the same; they can actually create stress. Yes, business must(?) be handled, but the organizers should be intentional about providing space for rest; it might be the only time during the year, clergy have that opportunity to get away from it all.

Understanding how the cells work also leads to understanding the need to set boundaries. Clergy are always admonished to set boundaries; however, just what these boundaries as they relate to rest and how do diocesan leadership help them in maintaining these boundaries?

Physical boundaries: protect your health – One day Jesus said to his disciples – let us go over to the other side of the lake” so they got in a boat (Luke 8:22-23).

Mental boundaries: protect your priorities – Jesus said, No one can serve two masters (Lk 16:13).

Emotional boundaries: protect you from others’ abuse – Jesus resisted against a crowd that was trying to throw him off a cliff for claiming to be the Messiah (Luke 4:28-30).

Spiritual boundaries: provide room for unhurried intimacy – when asked what is the greatest commandment, Jesus answered, Love the Lord your God . . . (Lk 10:27).

Social boundaries: protect you from the protectionism trap – when faced with hundreds of hungry people, Jesus extended grace. He did not make an excuse for a meager meal (Lk 9:10-17). Also value your inner circle – Jesus took Peter, John, and James, on a mountain to pray and there he revealed truth (Lk 9:28).

⁵ I spent two weeks as the guest of two clergy colleagues in Arizona. Every sense was different; however, as I climbed into bed the first night, I slid between sheets that were ironed! Not even hotel room sheets (at least not those where I stay) have freshly ironed sheets. The sleep, the rest I experienced those two weeks was unimaginable.

Sensory boundaries: protect you from fatigue and overstimulation – Jesus often withdrew from the crowds to desolate places to pray (Lk 5:15-16).

Creative boundaries: abandon life’s outcomes to God’s sovereignty. Jesus was tempted to be overcome with fear about the cross. He overcame by letting go. He chose not to force things, but to trust God’s will.⁶

BE WARY OF GROUP AGREEMENT

Have you ever attended a conference you didn’t want to attend; been in a meeting where all you could think about was when it would end and you could run away – fast, or been on Zoom with your camera off? If any of these have occurred, why didn’t you do something about it? What was holding you back?

Abilene Paradox
+ Fear of Separation
+ Blame and Resentment
+ Negative Fantasy
+ Real Risk
+ Real Conflict

The late Jerry Harvey called this aspect of groupthink the Abilene Paradox – when people, logical people, choose to go in a direction they should not go, make a decision that they know they should not make. Why would intelligent people do such a thing, he asked. First, people are afraid of being labelled “not a team player,” they are afraid of jeopardizing future opportunities by not agreeing to what the leader, for example wants. People can also create negative fantasies, e.g., if I don’t go along, I might never get that well-resourced church or if I get on the wrong side of people, I might never be bishop.

The problem with the Abilene Paradox, the failure to manage agreement is that what was feared to go wrong, will probably go wrong and when that happens, then the finger-pointing begins. Someone has to be responsible; blame has to be affixed which means that some of those negative fantasies that could have been avoided if someone had said, “no,” become reality. However, one of the main premises of the Abilene Paradox is that real risk is involved in any group venture, any decision-making process. There are those who are willing to call attention to the folly, at their own risk, and it is a calculated risk, rather than to go to Abilene.⁷

Sometimes it is possible to learn from an organization’s mistakes, but by the time that happens, resources – financial, materiel, and human have been wasted.

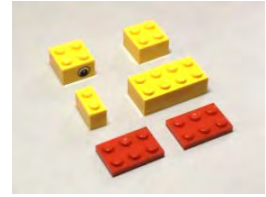
Finally, in any organization, there is conflict. The task of the leader is to determine the difference between the failure to manage agreement that will take the organization in the wrong direction (Abilene Paradox) and true conflict that requires different solutions to resolve. Every organization, to include the church, has been to Abilene and many have purchased expensive real estate. It’s time to find a good agent, sell, and move.

⁶ Sandra Dalton Smith.

⁷ Jerry V. Harvey, *The Abilene Paradox and Other Meditations on Management* (Jossey-Boss: New York, 1988).

WHAT THE DUCK?⁸

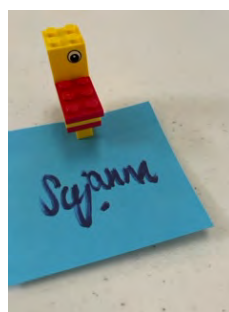
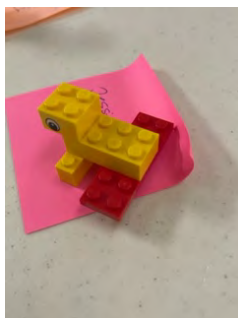
In the Episcopal Church (any Church), there are terms and processes that we believe everyone understands. Just the term “strategic visioning” can mean different things to different people, even those on the strategic visioning team, and particularly as the process and assignments are rolled out throughout the diocese. This exercise “shows” rather than explains (using words) how people hear and process words, even familiar words, differently. It also shows the possibility of real conflict based on how people understand the various aspects of the visioning plan.



While no one (to date) has figured out how many combinations can be created with the six duck bricks, LEGO mathematicians have determined the possible combinations with six (6) standard 2x4 LEGO bricks. There are 915,103,765 combinations.



The participants discovered that not one of their ducks looked alike. Imagine this exercise being used at larger gatherings, vestry meetings, council and committee meetings. The possibility for real conflict can be recognized early in the discussion, planning, and implementation processes. There are 9,455 members in the diocese, 9,455 opportunities to understand the plan differently.



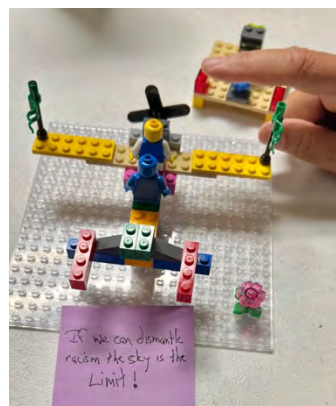
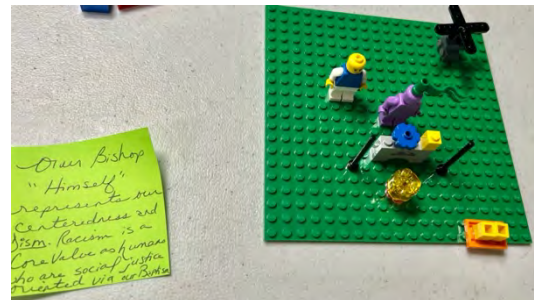
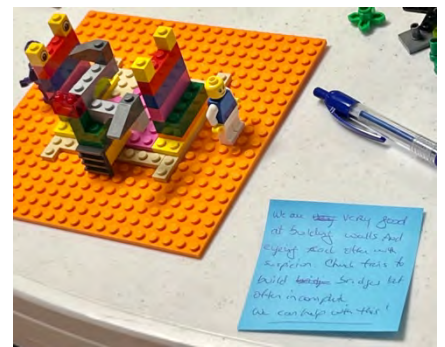
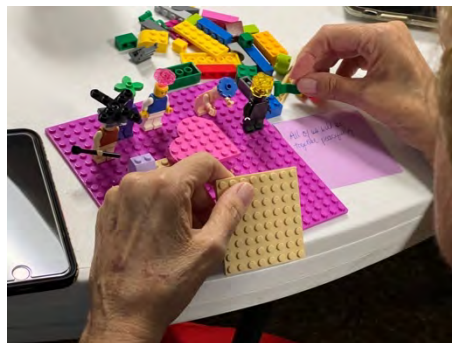
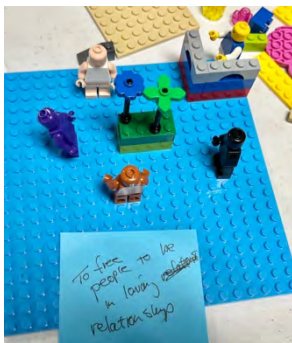
⁸ For those with sensitive ears, that is the actual name of the exercise.

TASK 1: WHY DISMANTLING RACISM IS IMPORTANT FOR THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF MISSOURI (or is it?)

It would be nice (Christian, perhaps?) if every member of the diocese believed that dismantling racism is important; however, as we know from the political climate in this country, far too many people like the country the way it is. They have no problem with white supremacy; they have no problem with people of color being unfairly treated. For them, this is a white man's country and needs to remain that way and will do anything in their power to keep this country (falsely) white. To avoid a trip to Abilene, there must always be the acknowledgement that there are members of this diocese who are not on board with dismantling racism. With that said, these are the reasons why dismantling racism is important:

- All are welcome and we need not to exclude anyone
- Important to take down walls
- St. Louis center of racism for the country – riots in East St. Louis, need to remember history
- Wall determines haves and have nots, (the LEGO) heart bridges it all
- Wrong side of town is remembered and we are the site of the last lynching in the country
- Break down walls of white supremacy of separation
- Remove feeling of being an outsider
- Church fails if change doesn't occur
- To empower, to be empowered, and to experience the radical love of Christ through the Church
- We need to be reminded that we are all one in Christ
- Love is the central mission of the church
- Removes barriers and allows us to flourish in the joy of the Spirit
- To spread God's abundance more equitably
- No room for "you" (must be "us")
- Because if we don't, we miss the love and power of God
- I despise your festivals – away with the noise of your songs! But let justice roll down like a river
- It's killing us
- Equity, justice, beloved community for all people. God is building ahead, calling us to mission
- To free people to be in relationship
- If we want to live into our baptismal vows, we must dismantle racism
- If it isn't love, it isn't God – systemic racism boxes our people out
- Racism builds walls that need to be pulled down
- We need to build bridges – God is watching
- God is love, we can live in harmony
- The eyes of God and the eyes of history are upon us
- All of us can live together peacefully
- Bishop himself represents centeredness, anti-racism is a core value of our baptism

- When we dismantle racism, the sky's the limit
- Sitting together, facing each other, we are children loved by God, called to love without distinction
- Exclusion from flagship of power—folks on the outside, love on the margin
- Because the fortress of power's whiteness is stuck in self-congratulations for electing a Black bishop
- Because racism puts the church into corners that block us from the power of the Holy Spirit to transform and heal us
- So that we can see more of, and experience the true love of God
- If it is not about love, it is not about God
- So we can all see God's love and share it. We can't always all see it.





TASK 2: WHAT IS DIVERSE LITURGY?

In the week after the clergy conference, there were two major services – that of the ordination and consecration of the Rt. Rev. Paula E. Clark, bishop of Chicago⁹ and the funeral of Queen Elizabeth. Both were Anglican, both followed the Book of Common Prayer (the 1662 for the Queen’s); however, they were different and spoke to different cultures and what it is to be Episcopal/Anglican. There are those in the Episcopal Church who want an “Anglican identity” that some refer to as “dignified and refined,” while others want liturgy that includes the different cultures that are the Episcopal Church, which are still “dignified and refined.” It is often that “dignified and refined” is based in a colonial superiority of what is correct worship. Everyone who sits in our pews, whether member or visitor should see and experience themselves somewhere in the liturgy.¹⁰

Bishop Paula is the first African American and woman to serve as the Bishop of Chicago, and her service had African drums and dancers, some in the procession swayed to the music, there were extemporaneous “Alleluias” and “Amens.” The liturgy was read in English and Spanish and the psalter responses were in Latin, Hebrew, Spanish, Korean, Japanese, Chinese, German, Italian, Xhosa, and Polish. The music was varied to include “traditional” hymns and Black gospel.

The Queen’s service was high Anglican, quiet with no shows of emotion; however, that is to be expected. If we are to speak to those inside our walls and out in the mission field, our liturgies must speak to the cultures of all who want to call themselves Episcopalians. It is a mark of radical hospitality.

⁹ There was also the ordination and consecration of the bishop of Utah, the Rt. Rev. Phyllis Spiegel which featured the South Sudanese Choir and the honor song and Ute blessing from Red Spirit.

¹⁰ I officiated at a funeral and as we were leaving to go to the cemetery, a young Black woman came to me and introduced herself. She said that she was Roman Catholic and expected the service to be familiar, similar, but as she sat, she felt something was different and, initially, she couldn’t figure out what was going on . . . until I went behind the table to preside over communion. She said she had been Roman Catholic all her life and it was the first time she saw herself in the service. Representation is everything.

Why do we need diverse liturgy? These are the reasons offered.

- Made up of all sorts of parts leading to all sorts of possibility – love over all—outside traditional boundaries – on ramps are needed
- Multi-cultural/multi-racial hospitality—faith/love overarching
- Invites, values, and expresses multiple cultures, traditions, ethnicities
- Expressions of understandings, bridge between world and church/church and world.
- Joy!
- Draws from many source/cultures
- Keeps baptismal font in center, Jesus in the center, rarely a straight line, grounded in love
- Pentecost!
- Extremely different people united in liturgy they love – bread and wine remain
- Diverse worship honors all of the senses, but leaves room for the intimacy of sacred space
- It is consistently looking for how the Holy Spirit is calling us to include everyone
- Everybody has a place at the table
- Brings more into the dance of God
- The cross in a thousand colors facing a thousand directions





TASK 3: FORMATION . . . WHAT'S NEEDED --YOUTH THROUGH SAINTS?

A major question that must be asked is “who and what” are we forming? Are we forming disciples of Jesus, those who are committed to continuing Jesus’ transformative mission or are we forming White Anglicans? That is a tough question to ask; however, it must be asked if we are to get to the crux of formation? Do we believe that people are empty vessels, blank slates that in which, on which, we create our brand of Christian -- Episcopalians? Or are we Episcopal boot camp, where we break people down, take away their identity, their culture, their traditions and then re-form them, shape them, into what we believe Episcopal Christians should “properly” be? We need to allow, create space, for people to bring all of who they are to the process and know that we are much better for it.

The Anglican identity can exclude and while many people love it, others are told who you are is not welcome here; you must become like us. You must become one of us which all too often means that part of a person must be killed. African Americans have experienced that throughout their history in this country; killing ourselves to become American, Christian, Episcopalian.

This is what formation means to participants:

- Raising people grounded in scripture, eucharist and baptism surrounded by the liturgical rhythm
- We need to be attuned to the movement of the spirit, committed to the world, creative; various and stable and helping each other learn, grow and carry the cross
- Need to be intentional (youth), flexible, adapt to change happening in society
- Focus
- Be willing to change
- Love in action, bridging society and the church
- Grounded in love, and involves all
- Totally fresh ways of Jesus apprenticeship grounded in self-knowledge and love while open arms to winds of God
- Intergenerational learning
 - All members impact on being church
 - Service of church to humanity
- Formation is life-long and individualized; church as conduit of learning
- Grounded in love, ready to learn
- Scaffolded to offer deeper levels of learning, growth, spirituality

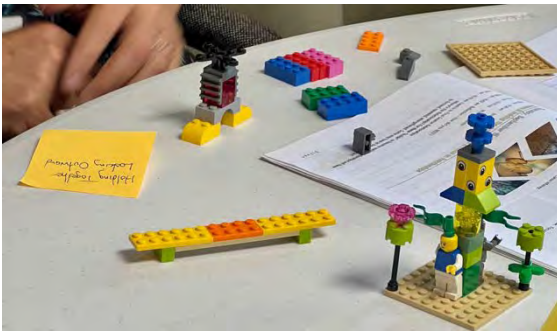


TASK 4: WHAT IS MISSIONAL COMMUNITY?

In reality, the church is a missional community; however, sometimes priorities can become vague, that is where smaller communities dedicated to one or two specific mission activities assist the larger community in accomplishing the mission of Jesus. Missional communities are really house churches, harkening back to early Christianity. Relationships may be stronger than in the larger parish where, depending on which service is attended, members might not know one another even though they have been in the church for years. A special relationship is formed in missional communities that not only focus on the mission, but also building relationships between and among each of the members. They care for each other, in addition to those with whom they are engaging mission. One aspect of missional community is that the community might grow and when a certain number is reached, the group can split off to form another community. However the community is formed and acts, the focus is on being intentional in relationship and purpose.

For this group, the following are the characteristics of missional community:

- No need for buildings, programs or bulletins, just gather in Christ's love
- Recognizing the Jesus on the altar in the Jesus in the street
- Doing agape work to follow God out to one another – beloved community
- Great commission – go ye therefore
- Passing on the light of Christ
- Doors are open, the way to the altar is clear – people serving inside and outside
- Holding together, looking outward
- Looking outward with love
- Church—open doors, no gated communities. Weapons outside; people facing each other – ‘eyes’ on the prize and safety/wellness
- Breaking bread together and build safety – safe bridges across which friends from the outside can come in at their own pace



TASK 5: WHO ARE OUR NEIGHBORS?

There are a lot of questions. Are our congregations islands unto themselves and primarily commuter churches or are our parishes the center of community life where people from the community come for any and all services and faith experiences? Are our doors open and how do we define welcome and provide hospitality? Again, are the boundaries fluid that expand to welcome all? How do we meet our neighbors OR do we believe that the red doors do all the inviting? What are the cultures, the traditions, ethnicities of those who surround us and are we willing to change, or tweak to insure that we are truly welcoming? Is the church building open at times other than Sundays and are there events and activities for all to participate? In other

words, does the church ground the community? What portion of the budget is allocated for translation services (language and ASL)? How many languages (in the community) are used in our printed and mailed material?

As we think about neighbors, this is how the participants viewed those in the mission field:

- Everyone! With the goal of being together united in love.
- Who is NOT my neighbor? – No one.
- We need to love and care for all people as well as the plants, water, animals of our planet
- God sees people I don't see and God loves people I don't love.
- Church is in the middle with people walking outside and church is not going to get them, but eye of God sees all creation! Plants, etc.
- Anyone who we connect or interact with in any way
- Whomever the Holy Spirit blows our way
- Everyone we don't admit; everyone we least expect
- The loving people next door, the trees, the hedges
- Where Mr. Rogers NEVER has to ask "who is my neighbor?"
- Play the B side because the A side is worn out



TASK 6: WHAT DOES INSTITUTIONAL RACISM LOOK LIKE?

If we look at the history of the Anglican/Episcopal Church we find that the Anglican Church in the colony of Virginia birthed slavery and became the model of human debasement that other colonies and denominations followed. It was the desire of James Blair, the highest ranking Anglican at the time, that the Anglican church be an example for other denominations of how to mistreat Africans in America. It is similar to the system of apartheid in South Africa. That government looked to the race codes and segregation laws and practices in this country to develop their system of racism. When the colonies fought for their independence from England which resulted in the formation of the United States in 1776, the Episcopal Church was also formed out of the remnants of the Church of England and the same enslavers who were Anglican were now Episcopalian and they believed that Africans were 3/5 of a human being.

What does it mean when clergy are asked to raise their hands if they pastor a “white” church and hands raise? When did the church become “white” as opposed to a church the majority of whose members are white.

Whiteness has its privileges.

Our Black parishes are the result of this Church’s racist past. They were not formed because Blacks wanted to worship separately from whites. They were formed because whites did not want to worship with Blacks and even today, there is a hesitancy. Blacks are accustomed to working, learning and worshipping with whites while the reverse is not common.

We confess and lament that we – as individuals and as a body – have accommodated and been complicit with racism in the wider culture, in our dioceses, and with one another. Too often, white bishops have engaged and conducted ministry in ways that diminished or disregarded the experience and voices of bishops of color, and bishops with primary languages other than English. Our individual actions and our corporate practices have assumed white superiority, excluding and marginalizing members of the Body of Christ, and thus failing our promise to respect the image of God in each of us.¹¹

The Church does not need to covenant, to confess if something has not occurred that requires acknowledgement and repentance. Recognizing, as before, that there are those in our church who do not believe there is institutional racism and therefore, will not covenant, to eliminate and to change, we must continue on in spite of them.

As the group explained their builds for this section, these thoughts emerged:

¹¹ The Episcopal Church, *Covenant for Reckoning with White Supremacy as a House of Bishops and as a Church*, https://www.episcopalchurch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/11/bbc_hob_covenant_to_break_free_of_white_supremacy.pdf.

- I'm right and I'm willing for you to die to keep it right
- Precarious – prevents specific groups of people access to leadership resources and abundance
- Tall walls for the people of color or no door at all
- I'm white, I run this!
- Structural oppression
- Habitual violence as maintenance
- Practiced indifference
- Unequal access to abundance
- End is the abyss
- "Privilege?" What privilege?
- Walls are up; no bridges built
- I don't see color
- Members only
- Privilege has its benefits
- 1 color



TASK 7: WHAT DOES COMMUNICATION LOOK LIKE IN THE “EMERGENT CHURCH?”

Emergent church -- is that one of those terms that might require the “What the Duck” exercise? According to Eddie Gibbs and Ryan K. Bolger, emergent churches are “communities

that practice the way of Jesus within postmodern cultures.”¹² In other words, emergent churches recognize the need to change, not to format itself to the wiles of society, rather, these churches take into account what is important in the lives of those whom they wish to evangelize, and make necessary changes to its processes. Core values/doctrines do not change, rather, for example, liturgy is modified to make sure it speaks to all who walk through the church’s doors.

In order for the Diocese of Missouri to meet the spiritual, physical, and emotional needs of those in its mission field, participants offered the following concerning how this church has its ear to what is important in society:

- Platform that supports work of emergent church
- Exiting building we call church and being church – Jesus
- Embracing all our neighbors with the love of God – follow God out!
- Art/action/accessibility
- One to one and crowd-sourced
- Take a chance, be creative, tell the story
- Communication is collaborative, personal, accessible to people with limited means
- If we are not careful, it will be overrun by technology
- Both/and – embrace tech, but leaving nobody behind. High tech, high personal care
- The cross is the message, we wave the flag of communication with shouts of joy and enthusiasm



¹² Douglas Brown, “The Emerging Church: The New Worldly Church,” Faith Baptist Bible College and Theological Seminary, May/June 2008, <https://faith.edu/faith-news/the-emerging-church-the-new-worldly-church/>.

TASK 8: WHAT IS PASTORAL CARE?

Pastor, lawyer, counselor, teacher, hand-holder, visionary, death doula, birth doula . . . imagine everything that wasn't taught in seminary, that is what pastoral care has become and the list continues. COVID has stretched the capabilities of any cleric and the more they do, the more is expected of them. They are THE PASTOR. As we consider pastoral care in a society where civil and human rights are being assailed, the stressors being placed on clergy becoming insurmountable and yet they try to respond, to meet the needs of congregation members and those who just want to talk to a priest.

Who is the pastor for the pastor?

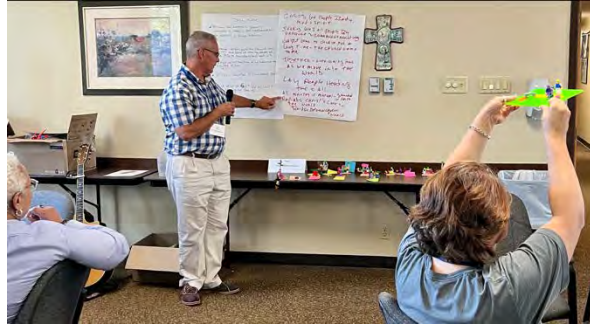
Participants indicated these criteria as being important in providing pastoral care:

- Keeping healthy boundaries while breaking down strongholds
- Sharing the unconditional love, care, and the compassion of Jesus
- For lo, they are a stiff-necked people, but we do our best and love them anyway, at their best and at their worst
- Interlocking hearts, Christ at the center
- When life throws at you everything and the kitchen sink, God is there helping bear the load
- Caring for people, body, mind and spirit
- Sharing love with all people by presence and communion and anointing – couldn't come to church for a long time, the church came to me
- Together, overcoming fear as we move into the world
- Lay people heeding the call
- All ministry is mutual—grounded in faith
- Radiates Christ's love to the world, bridge between church and the world



The kitchen sink





TASK 9: WHAT IS MISSION? (Whose mission?)

An atheist asked the question why did churches have different missions because for him, the church's mission, regardless of denomination was the mission of Jesus, to continue Jesus' transforming work in the world. It is a difficult mission and one that will only be fulfilled with Jesus' second coming; however, it seems that if the church focused on *showing Jesus* by continuing his mission, there would be little concern for growing the church. As Jesus said, if he be lifted up, he will draw people to him, he will draw people to the body of Christ, the church in the world today.

For the participants, mission is:

- Permeable, multiple points of access to God's heart
- Journeying together, through uncertainty toward Jesus
- Following, leading, participating in the direction of justice and equality – do anything to get it
- Be the light in the community to Jesus Christ
- Sharing the love of God with others
- Bridges made from Love
- Moving in one direction toward loving the Lord your God with heart, mind and soul and loving your neighbor as yourself
- Love God, love each other
- Mission is centered on love and not stagnant, it's moving
- Open door, facing outward

- Invitation to turn
- Let us go and share God's love
- Mission is often found outside the church doors



TASK 10: WHAT IS A VITAL CONGREGATION?

We are ending where we began. Take all of these components, work them thoroughly, and a vital congregation will appear. Of course every parish will not be able to accomplish each and every aspect in the strategic visioning plan because congregations are like people, they have different gifts and talents. However, if an environment is created where there is the opportunity to experiment, fail on occasion, learn, and experience joy, each parish will be able to discover its role in the mission of Jesus. To those gathered, a vital congregation shared these components:

- Less stuff, more Jesus
- Jesus, love, peace
- Love, God's love sharing all things in common
- People tending other people: people working on common goals
- Crossing over smooth or troubled waters together
- No matter which way the wind blows, shining the love of God to all

- Open doors, centered on table fellowship, sacrament, cross, enlivened by unique gifts of each other



TASK 11: RELATIONSHIPS

Relationship is a word we constantly hear in the church – our relationship with Jesus, with God and with each other. The success of every aspect of the strategic vision is based on relationship. How the diocese and its member congregations are able to evangelize, to spread the good news of Jesus is grounded in relationship and part of a meaningful relationship is being able to deal with the truth. This report has asked tough questions about the history of racism in the Episcopal Church and how racism continues to affect relationships in and out of the Church.

How do people view the Episcopal Church as the eldest daughter of the Church of England. As we saw after the death of Queen Elizabeth, there are people who want the world never to forget the colonizing of countries and peoples – at one time the sun never set on the English empire. Countries that were colonized by Britain have and continue to gain their independence. England and the Church of England are one in the same; therefore, the church is part and parcel of the colonizing and slavery aspect of Great Britain.

As we engage in formation, there is a need to tell the truth about the church, a truth that continues to have its tentacles in racism. Truth-telling is key to a firm foundation for those who might choose to become Episcopalians and for those who want to remain Episcopalians.

This country is often referred to as a nation of immigrants; however, Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz in her book, *Not a Nation of Immigrants: Settler Colonialism, White Supremacy, and a History of Erasure and Exclusion*, challenges that notion.¹³ According to her, immigrants tend to enter a country with the view of “fitting in.” They bring their customs, traditions, and religions; however, it is not with the view of changing the country they wish to become a part. Settlers, on the other hand, come to take over, to change the land, in many cases, they have taken from others. That is the story of this country.

Is the Episcopal Church as the eldest daughter of the Church of England, an immigrant religion or a settler religion? Is there space for people who believe and think differently?

Many of us grew up with the myth of Columbus *discovering* the Americas when there were people already inhabiting the lands. Christians who came brought with them the Doctrine of Discovery in that lands where people were not Christian were free to be exploited and taken because “Jesus is the only way.” In 1845, the notion of Manifest Destiny was coined that led its advocates to believe that the United States was destined by God, to expand its dominion, its rule, across all that has become the United States, that it was a right to spread democracy and capitalism, through genocide, regardless of the indigenous peoples already here.

As we look at Anglicanism, and then the Episcopal Church, has there been a recognition that this faith was a settler religion? The history of the colonies provides proof that to serve in the governmental structure, the House of Burgesses, a man had to be a member of the Anglican Church. Anyone who lived in the English colonies was presumed to be Anglican, regardless of whether they had any belief system. Was there any effort to understand and incorporate or even acknowledge the belief systems of indigenous peoples or, as we know, anything other than Christianity was considered pagan, heathen? What does it mean, how do others hear and interpret, “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19)? How does that sound to, in particular, young African Americans today, who more and more are turning or returning to traditional African religions to feel whole, to find shalom or use ways to engage spirituality that seem outside mainstream Christianity? Are we willing to make room for them as we consider what formation in the 21st century should be? Again, who are we forming and why and how does this affect the relationship with those in and out of the church? How we understand the Episcopal Church in this country is critical to the truth-telling aspect in our move toward racial reconciliation understanding that the term reconciliation is problematic.¹⁴ There needs to be racial conciliation (coming together as one) before we can have reconciliation (putting back

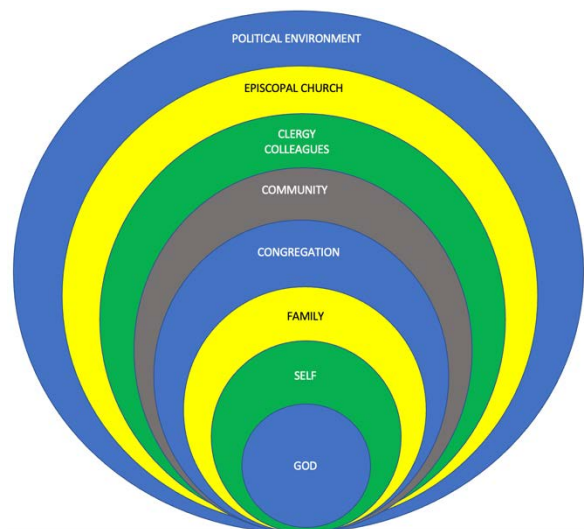
¹³ Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, *Not a Nation of Immigrants: Settler Colonialism, White Supremacy, and a History of Erasure and Exclusion* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2022).

¹⁴ The Episcopal Church, “Racial Reconciliation,” <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/ministries/racial-reconciliation/truth-telling/>.

together a relationship that once was whole, but was broken through sin). The races in this country have never been one; therefore, there can be no racial reconciliation.

Which relationships inside and outside the church need to be formed, mended, modified, and sometimes eliminated to be what the church says it is called to be? How do we engage in true healing with those who have been harmed, providing what needs to be healed, what needs to be repaired? What is the church willing to risk to find, as Lisa Sharon Harper offers, real peace and wholeness, rather than the absence of conflict? What is the church willing to risk to insure that everyone has *enough*, because there is no reason for poverty, homelessness, lack of full employment, if we believe that God has provided everything and that all must share in that bounty? How do we live into our baptismal covenant that calls us to respect the dignity of every human being and restore that dignity where human beings, to include the church, have destroyed it?¹⁵

In addition to determining which relationships the diocese needs to form, strengthen, renew, let go, there is also a need to assist the people in the pews (and perhaps those in the mission field) determine which relationships are healthy. This can actually be part of the formation process – how to form healthy and non-toxic relationships. Again, Lisa Sharon Harper, is helpful in identifying relationships and their impact upon the people and being truthful about those relationships and how they affect our relationship with God and each other. We bring our lives to the church and no aspect of those lives is outside the purview of our healing and restorative call. People who are suffering, and there are many suffering in our pews (which our sermons fall to address), cannot bring their whole selves to this process. They need healing before they can heal what ails the church and it requires more than “just pray.”



TASK 12: MODELING THE BEHAVIOR

From the very beginning, participants modeled how the implementation of the strategic plan will roll out. Everyone began with the same pieces and the same instructions and yet the results were different. Those who choose to participate in the implementation of the plan will have the same information, and still, the “results” will be different, even with specific guidelines, benchmarks, and timelines.



¹⁵ Lisa Sharon Harper, *The Very Good Gospel: How Everything Wrong Can be Made Right* (New York: Waterbrook, 2016).

For the final exercise, looking at the relationships that are needed or will need to be modified for the plan to become a reality, as participants studied the builds for each year, they took from them what was important to them, for whatever reason, and placed them on the main table which represented the accomplishment of the plan. Still, there were those who stood back and watched others as they made decisions. There were those to dove right in and began to explain how relationships needed to be developed between certain aspects of the plan. Others guided, while, a couple of participants, never engaged – all of this is the reality of the diocese’s plan. Rather than change the dynamics, it will be important to recognize the dynamics and work with them. This plan cannot be forced. It is organic and will constantly change on its own.



In developing the final build, many pieces were also left on the tables, again, identifying what participants believed to be possible based on their own capabilities and time constraints. No one has the time to fully devote to the implementation of the plan and that is just one reality that must be accepted.



Connectors were used to show relationships, how components were related to each other. There was an array of connectors – some straight and rigid, others flexible, there were chains that demonstrated strength of relationships and also relationships that were binding and needed to be broken. There was discussion

about which connectors to were used and why they were placed where they were. Consensus was gained on the connections made and why they were important to the actualization of the plan.



Physically visualizing the plan, in addition to leaving certain aspects (for later) enabled participants to “see” how the plan would each year. Years one and two were based on reality – what can be accomplished. Participants could see themselves in the tasks and how much energy would be expended. For the final year, year three, the build was more expansive. We see what can be accomplished in the first two years and this creates the potential for even more work in year 3 which was fully about potential. We see what we can do and so we can imagine even greater success, still focusing on resources and relationships.



Year 1



Year 2



Year 3

CONCLUSION

There are sixty (60) active priests and eighteen (18) deacons in the diocese, in addition to approximately thirty (30) retired clergy. The forty-one (41) clergy present at the conference represent about one-half of active clergy. How to engage the remaining clergy, acknowledging that all might not be on board will be a constant concern. Add to this the approximately 9,455 lay members, while the task is great, it is not daunting as long as there is a process to assist everyone in determining *WHERE* they fit in implementing the strategic visioning plan. There is also one campus ministry that must be included and possibly the Episcopal Service Corps which may or may not be re-activated.

This exercise shows the potential to succeed if the diocese is able to temper expectations, celebrate and communicate success and always ---- REMEMBER THE DUCK!

RESOURCES

Dropbox link to pictures and videos of sessions

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/f8yfs3bqgab50so/AAB4A-779Wll4zEQQbXg-VEa?dl=0>