



REQUIEM OR RENAISSANCE BUILD & LAUNCH GUIDE



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DIOCESE OF MISSOURI

INTRODUCTION: THEOLOGICAL FRAME

Why are you sleeping? --Luke 22:46

Average Sunday attendance: down. Average membership numbers: down. Yearly pledge income: down. The statistics don't lie. For the past forty years, and accelerating like a train down a mountain for the last twenty, the Episcopal Church and indeed the entire Christian mainstream has been losing strength, losing growth, losing life. If you asked an average American, "What's an Episcopalian?" they would have no idea if it was a geological age or a specific kind of hedge fund.

This decline toward death has led to a deep underlying anxiety in our churches. We have been sitting by the hospital bed of our dying church, mourning it and blaming ourselves for its failure.

But there are two distinct options here. There is death that ends in death: here lies the Episcopal Church, crumbled to dust and irrelevance. And then there is death that leads to resurrection. That is a death freely entered into, an embrace of the Cross that is undergirded by the knowledge that God will call us into and through this death into new life.

The point of openly acknowledging the decline and death of the church is not to lock the doors never to open them again. The point of embracing the death of the church is the same as it is for us as individuals—Jesus' death on the Cross was above all the source of our liberation. This is the choice that is laid before us: death leading to death, or death leading to resurrection.

Every time we embrace a death—the death of our pride, the death of our old goals, the death of our privilege, the death of our preconceived ideas of what a church should be and do, the death of our desire for "success"—we will find that resurrection is breaking forth everywhere around us. Investing in the path of death and resurrection, the terribly difficult and joyfully liberating path of discipleship as the Body of Christ, will awaken in us a vitality that is far more compelling to seekers than all our old, self-serving, desperate, half-believed-in "strategies." If we can embrace membership in the dying Body of Christ, we the Church can know the joy of being the resurrected Living Body of Christ. All we have to do is take Jesus' words to heart: "Very



truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.”

WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT: REQUIEM OR RENAISSANCE

Do you want to be made well? --John 5:6

Once we’ve named the struggle and realized that it gives us an incredible spiritual freedom, we can start to have courageous conversations about what this means and what we’re called to do about it. Requiem or Renaissance is a structured forum for those conversations to happen, in the form of an 18-month discernment and skills-building program.

This guide will set out the principles of Requiem or Renaissance so that you can adapt this work to best fit your needs. One of the key principles of Requiem or Renaissance is hyper-contextuality—it has to work for you, where you are, and who you are right now.

In this program, congregations enter a discernment process that will help them determine God’s call to them: to a Requiem, a holy ending of this congregation’s ministry in this location at this time, or a Renaissance, a church re-plant with a new vision. As they are discerning, they will build skills to live out the call they articulate.

Any and all outcomes are on the table, from starting from scratch with house church meetings, to closing and selling buildings, to collaborating with other ministries or secular partners to revitalize, and no doubt many other possibilities we can’t imagine yet. We want our congregations to walk into their futures with eyes wide open and clear self-determination—not be forced into fewer and fewer options by declining money and membership. Most congregations who have already taken part in this program have found themselves called to Requiem AND Renaissance, allowing some aspects of their ministry to go to holy rest while new ministries rise up. (Watch [year one](#) and [year two](#) participant reflections.)

Both the Requiem path and the Renaissance path are intended to lead to resurrection—but just as in the gospels, the resurrected Body of Christ will probably look unfamiliar and different from what we used to know and what we expected to see.

Where is your faith? --Luke 8:25

PRINCIPLES OF REQUIEM OR RENAISSANCE

As we in the Diocese of Missouri seek to share this work with the wider church, we believe that it will be most successful if built in a hyper-contextual way by each diocese/congregation rather than as a cookie cutter plug-and-play. As you read through the elements below, think of how they may best be adapted in your context.

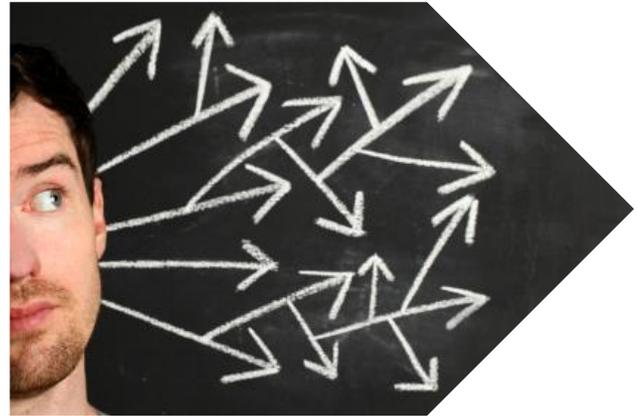
- **Self-determination.** We seek to give congregations the responsibility for discerning their futures and step into the leadership they are capable of.
- **Trust building.** We seek to overcome the (understandable) assumption that this work is window-dressing for closing churches. We build credibility by showing up in person and walking with

congregations, working toward congregations seeing the diocese as their partner in carrying out their call, rather than the bad guy out to close them or simply a perpetrator of benign neglect letting them drift and struggle.

- **Expect anxiety.** This program deliberately injects anxiety into what is likely an already anxious system. The key to making the anxiety constructive rather than destructive is the slow, attentive work of building trust.
- **Calculate capacity.** The key tension we have observed in this work is pushing these congregations far enough, asking enough of them, to help them make meaningful change, without overloading them and burning them out. The churches most in need of revitalization are ironically the ones with the least capacity to carry it out—it takes all their people power just to keep worship going on Sunday mornings. This tension needs attention at every stage of the work.
- **Grassroots wisdom.** Recruit Shepherds from within your diocese (rather than bringing in outside experts), who can address the areas of development that your congregations need and speak to them in a hyper-contextual manner. The diocese seeing growth and new life coming from within its own resources cuts across chronic low-self esteem and depression at the institutional level, as well as cross-pollinating leadership within the diocese.
- **Minimum congregational viability.** The only congregations in the Diocese of Missouri who could not complete this work and had to drop out were the ones in high-conflict clergy transitions, who did not even have enough stability to field a Requiem or Renaissance team. This type of congregation should not be invited to this work until they are in a more stable season—which may or may not include having clergy.
- **AND vs. OR.** As stated above, many congregations have tended toward Requiem AND Renaissance as they have found things that are ready to die so that new things can find life in their ministry. That being said, there is value in creating a “fork in the road” urgency that the original title suggests—it helps us make hard choices and have courageous conversations.
- **Plan for what’s next.** There’s nothing worse than a church program that everyone is excited about in the moment that is forgotten about in six months. Work with congregations to help them move deeper into the Requiem or Renaissance ethos and fulfill their calls after they “graduate” from the program. Ongoing support is vital to retaining trust and creating sustainable change.
- **Help Requiem or Renaissance congregations identify as leaders.** The types of congregations who take part in Requiem or Renaissance are often small and struggling, whether rural, urban, or suburban. They are on the forefront of the changing church, and they should be encouraged to share the lessons they learn with larger congregations, as change-makers in the diocese.
- **Pray without ceasing.** Include prayer at every planning session and gathering. Recruit prayer partners from across the diocese to accompany participating congregations. Pray for this work at diocesan gatherings. And form the Shepherds team as people who pray together.
- **Strive in every Requiem or Renaissance element to reconnect people with the joy of the Gospel.** Too many congregations are struggling to revitalize through clever programming, relying on their own strength, and that will never work. Help participants connect or re-connect with the raw energy of God, the vital force of the gospel that can actually help them be excited to get out of bed every day and live love, and the structure and the programs will work themselves out.

OBJECTIVES

- Guide congregations to self-reflect in terms of the congregational lifecycle
- Equip them to be proactive about their future
- Walk with them as they discern their next steps
- Equip them for leadership in a time of transition
- Create cohorts of connection across congregations
- Infuse congregational life and discernment with the joy of the Gospel



For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not first sit down and estimate the cost, to see whether he has enough to complete it? --Luke 14:28

METHODOLOGY & STRUCTURE

- Congregations form a team: clergy (if they have clergy) plus 4-5 lay leaders from the parish
- Teams enroll in Requiem or Renaissance on online course platform ([Diocese of Missouri example](#) where you may “enroll” to take a look), where all resources are concentrated:
 - Meeting dates
 - Meeting zoom links
 - Contact info for Shepherds
 - Worship resources, including commissioning of the Requiem or Renaissance team
 - Videos of content presentations and discussions
 - Discussion board
 - Fillable pdfs for exercises and notetaking
 - Homework between sessions
- Meet for 18 months, one full day once a quarter attended by the entire cohort
- Day-long sessions on-site at each church with a Shepherd present as coach and partner
 - First part of the day: Large group meeting of entire cohort on zoom with content, beginning with opening prayer/worship
 - Second part of the day: team meetings to set goals/discuss progress/engage in exercises set by the presenter, supported by Shepherd on-site
 - Re-gather on zoom at the end of the day for closing worship and reflection
- Teams attend a discernment retreat of their entire cohort at the year mark, at which they meet with the Bishop (or other diocesan leader) for consultation and then move toward Requiem or Renaissance
- Program concludes with celebration of this work and all the ministry of these congregations, usually at Diocesan Convention
- Each congregation who chooses Renaissance signs up for a follow-up congregational or vestry retreat within 6 months of concluding the program to check in on goals and changes and focus in

on a subject area they need/want more development in (evangelism, outreach, stewardship, etc). Retreats are facilitated by Diocesan Coordinator or a Shepherd with the appropriate expertise for the congregation's focus area

Did I not choose you? --John 6:70

PERSONNEL NEEDED

- **Diocesan Coordinator** (canon, diocesan staff member, or other diocesan leader)
 - Recruits Shepherds
 - Hosts Shepherds retreat to pray and form as a team prior to launching the Requiem or Renaissance Cohort
 - Decides on content areas in consultation with Bishop and others as needed
 - Administers online course platform, uploads materials gathered from presenters, zoom recordings, etc.
 - Coordinates, schedules, and facilitates Shepherds' meetings (typically one meeting before each cohort gathering to process previous one and plan for next one)
 - Coordinates, schedules, and facilitates Cohort gatherings
- **Program Chaplain(s)**
 - Design and lead worship at Cohort gatherings
 - Facilitate zoom support group for clergy of participating congregations (optional but clergy have found it helpful to have their own processing space)
 - Lead prayer for each Shepherd meeting and for the Shepherds as a group prior to each Cohort meeting
- **Hospitality Coordinator**
 - Liaises with host parishes or retreat center for all-Cohort gatherings to coordinate:
 - Food and refreshments
 - Tech needs (projector, power strips, wi-fi access)
 - Collects and submits receipts for food/drink from each congregation for their on-site gatherings
 - Works with Diocesan Coordinator and others on logistics and registration for all-Cohort retreat
- **Shepherds**
 - Lay leaders, seminarians, priests, and deacons recruited from across the diocese based on their expertise in an area chosen by your diocese as a key locus of Requiem or Renaissance work (stewardship, conflict management, community discernment, etc.)
 - Provides 3 hours of content (some synchronous at a gathering, some asynchronous for homework to be posted on the platform)
 - Two hours of skills development for congregation out of Shepherd's area of expertise
 - One hour of spiritual practice designed to help congregations go deeper spiritually and reconnect to love of the Gospel

- Able to attend Shepherds meetings (approximately 6, on zoom) as well as Cohort gatherings (approximately 6, in person) over 18 months

TOPIC/CONTENT EXAMPLES

- Congregational Discernment
- Lifecycle of a Congregation
- Congregational Snapshot: Data on You
- Defining Requiem and Renaissance
- Missional Community
- Creation of Criteria for a Holy Ending or a Replant
- Spiritual Practices incl. Rule of Life
- Community Listening
- Parallel Development
- Stewardship, incl. Stewardship of Buildings
- Experimental Ministry
- Church Conflict Fire Insurance: Adaptive Leadership in Changing Systems



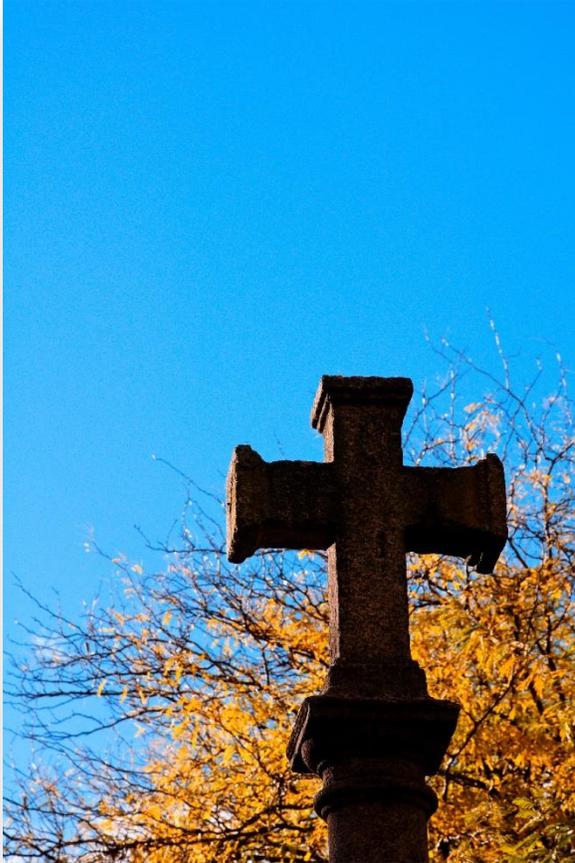
Requiem Track

- What is a Holy Ending?
- Documenting History
- Tending to Grief and Loss
- Celebrating the Saints of Before
- Searching for Whom to Seed
- Handing Over the Keys

Renaissance Track

- Models for Renaissance
- Evangelism
- Church Planting Principles/Techniques
- Spiritually Rooted Stewardship
- Community Engagement
- Project Management

*When I sent you out without a purse, bag, or sandals,
did you lack anything? --Luke 22:35*



EXAMPLES OF POTENTIAL MILESTONES AND METRICS

Quantitative

- 100% participation by parishes on diocesan aid
- All participants complete all parochial documentation on time

Qualitative

- Clear sense of God's call for their future
- Feel supported and connected to the diocesan household
- Tools to live out their discernment
- Renewed sense of energy and possibility
- Deeper connection to faith and faith community
- Deeper engagement with town/city/county

EXPENSES

- Food/Snacks/Hospitality
- Shepherd Stipends and Mileage
- Tech (incl. online course platform)
- Print materials (minimal)
- Facility for cohort retreat

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

COMMUNICATIONS TIMELINE

Before

- Invitations to participating congregations from Bishop or other diocesan leader
- Project overview to Standing Committee/Diocesan Council/Diocesan Household

During

- Updates to Diocesan Household (take photos and video throughout!)
- Ongoing instruction and support to participating congregations

After

- Detailed analysis of results to Standing Committee/Diocesan Council
- Report to Diocesan Convention

REQUESTS FROM THE DIOCESE OF MISSOURI

We in the Diocese of Missouri are thrilled to share this work with the wider church free of charge for your adaptation and use. We ask that you honor the following requests in order to use this material and model:

- Credit the Diocese of Missouri and The Rev. Canon Whitney Rice as the originators and copyright holders of this material and model
- Use the Requiem or Renaissance logo in your communications and materials (files provided to you)
- Hold a training of your Shepherds and other stakeholder leaders in your diocese in person, facilitated by The Rev. Canon Whitney Rice

CONCLUSION

Dioceses across the Episcopal Church are discovering new creativity and drive to innovate, to experiment, to risk. We are willing to follow the Holy Spirit into uncharted territory as we search out the future of the church in this time and place. Guided by God, collaborating with one another and our neighbors, we seek to answer that question through both Requiem and Renaissance. We will say goodbye to what needs to go to a holy rest while seeding and nurturing new expressions of faith and community among us, knowing that resurrection is rich on both paths.

The work is urgent and the time is now. As St. Paul writes in the Letter to the Romans, "For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God."

*Did I not tell you that if you believed,
you would see the glory of God? --John 11:40*



REQUIEM
or
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