



The Episcopal Diocese of North Dakota

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September 14, 2020

Dear Church Leader:

As a priest, deacon, senior warden, junior warden or delegate to the “virtual” Diocesan Convention on October 23-24, you have a key role in determining the future of the Episcopal Diocese of North Dakota and answering the question “What is God doing in North Dakota?”

Enclosed are three documents

- 1) The complete, 31-page “Report of the Diocesan Discernment Task Force to Diocesan Convention;
- 2) A 4-page summary of the report titled “DDTF Headlines;”
- 3) An abbreviated 2-page version of the DDTF Headlines which can be used as a bulletin insert in your hard copy or on-line church bulletin on these five Sundays: September 20 and 27, October 4, 11 and 18.

The DDTF Report, and several accompanying documents – specifically including Joe Hubbard’s survey of the diocesan governance structure in several similarly situated Episcopal dioceses, and a report by Dan Rice and Amy Phillips on the finances (income, assets and expenses) of our Diocese – are the product of many, many hours of work by many dedicated, selfless Episcopalians across North Dakota.

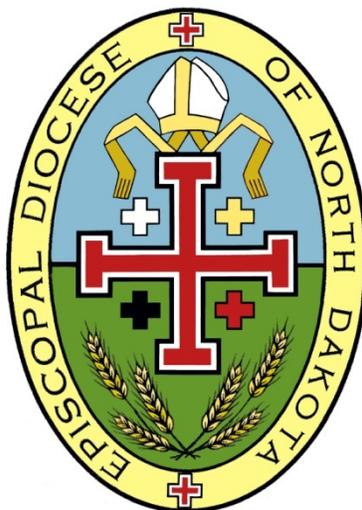
Our charge to you is that you utilize the enclosed documents – and the DDTF Report web site at <https://ndepiscopal.org/diocesan-discernment-task-force-ddtf/> -- in whatever way you deem most effective and efficient to obtain input on the DDTF Report and its recommendations from all members of your congregation. The Standing Committee and Diocesan Council both approved the initial DDTF report with only minor changes. Now we need to hear from you and your congregation as to whether you agree with what the DDTF has identified as priorities to be addressed for mission and ministry, its recommendation of a three-person staff consisting of a part-time Transitional Provisional Bishop, a full-time ordained Diocesan Minister, and a part-time Administrative Assistant, etc.

Send out an e-mail soliciting comments. For parishioners who don’t use e-mail, send them a letter. Call them on the phone or visit with them in person. Tell them their feedback is vitally important, and don’t rest until you have received that feedback. The future of our Diocese is at stake. Thank you!

Dr. John R. Baird, DDTF Chair

The Rev. Dr. John F. Floberg, President of the Standing Committee

Leo F.J. Wilking
Chancellor of the Episcopal Diocese of North Dakota



Report of the

Diocesan Discernment Task Force

as approved by the Standing Committee and Diocesan Council

to the

Diocesan Convention

Meeting “virtually” throughout the Diocese

October 23-24, 2020

This Report is also available at: <https://ndepiscopal.org/diocesan-discernment-task-force-ddtf/>

The Members of the DDTF are:

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Joni Bertel, Gethsemane Cathedral, Fargo
Joshua Floberg, St. James, Cannonball, St. George's, Bismarck
The Rev. Thad Bennett, Consultant

The following resolution was approved at the meeting of the Diocesan Council on August 22, 2020 at their meeting at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Grand Forks, ND.

A RESOLUTION TO ACCEPT AND ADHERE TO THE DDTF REPORT AND PLAN.

RESOLVED, that the 50th Annual Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of North Dakota accept the report created by the Diocesan Discernment Task Force (DDTF) as adopted by the Standing Committee and Diocesan Council, and adhere to the plan laid out by the DDTF for the diocese.

EXPLANATION: On October 20th, 2018, at the 48th Annual Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of North Dakota, Bishop Michael Smith announced his plans to resign on May 1st, 2019. This announcement sent the diocese into an interim period of discernment. During this period, the Diocesan Discernment Task Force (DDTF) was created and tasked with discerning *What God is up to in North Dakota?* and to report their findings to the Standing Committee, Diocesan Council, and the Convention by the 50th Annual Convention in 2020.

After diligent data gathering and discernment, through pandemic and fierce North Dakota winter, the DDTF presented their final report to a joint meeting of the Standing Committee and Diocesan Council on Saturday, August 22nd, 2020. Both the Standing Committee and Diocesan Council fully support this resolution.

Report of the Diocesan Discernment Task Force

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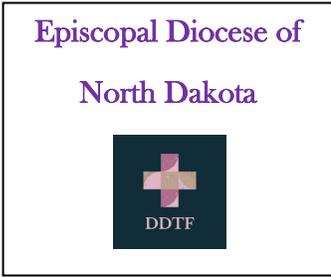
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1. OVERVIEW, CHARGE AND PROCESS:

The Work of the DDTF

August 2019 through August 2020

After the retirement of Bp. Smith, the Standing Committee decided not to just “elect another bishop” but rather to look at new models of leadership which might help the diocese follow God’s mission and ministry. This was to be a one year process, led by a Diocesan Discernment Task Force (DDTF) and engaging the members of the diocese to help decide what is the best way forward for our diocese and for Episcopalians in North Dakota. The Standing Committee also retained a consultant from the Presiding Bishop’s Office, the Rev. Thad Bennett from the Diocese of Vermont, to work with the diocese and the DDTF.

The Standing Committee charged the DDTF “*with coming up with a model of being the diocese... You are being asked to answer the question, “What is God doing in North Dakota?” This isn’t simply a matter of electing a new bishop – but likely a plan that will be in place for a full generation of time and beyond.*”

The initial meeting of the DDTF was scheduled to piggyback on the October 2019 Diocesan Convention. However, that meeting was moved to November and the DDTF used the two day meeting to build Christian community through prayer and Bible study, organize their plan and, at the Convention, explain their plan and gather data from the members of Convention.

Starting in January the DDTF contacted and visited almost every congregation in the diocese through mid-March. We had a “Clergy Day” meeting with the ordained members of the diocese facilitated by our consultant. We also asked the Rev. Joe Hubbard, our seminarian at Virginia

Theological Seminary, to research and write a report about what other dioceses were doing with regard to Episcopal leadership during a time of transition (see Addendum). (NOTE: From mid-March forward, the coronavirus pandemic meant that almost all the work of the DDTF was done “virtually” by phone or Zoom meetings.)

This work within the diocese culminated in the document, *Common Themes*, which we made available to everyone in the diocese. We also asked everyone to participate in a follow-up survey More than 20% of Episcopalians who attend church in North Dakota took the ***Follow-up Survey*** and gave the Task Force important information about what they were thinking.

Our approach was not to start with the question: *How do we get Episcopal leadership for North Dakota and what kind do we want?* Rather, we wanted to listen and find out what our sisters and brothers in North Dakota were feeling, thinking and praying about their lives of faith and ministry.

In other words, *What was God doing in North Dakota and how do we best support God’s ministry?* It was only after that “data gathering” that we asked, *What’s the best way forward in structure and leadership to accomplish our ministry?*

That high percentage response rate was amazing! And we were thankful that we heard something from every congregation in the diocese about where you think we are and how you think we should be moving forward.

During this same time DDTF members also spoke directly with the COM (Commission on Ministry), the NDCIM (North Dakota Council on Indian Ministries), the Standing Committee and staff. We also received the excellent report from Joe Hubbard about insights from other dioceses. We also researched and uncovered previous reports that the diocese prepared in 1989-90, 1993-98 and 2006, which outlined previous plans for mission and organization. Finally, we asked for and received an excellent report, *Summary of 2019 Income, Assets, and Expenses of the Episcopal Diocese of North Dakota*, by Amy Phillips & Dan Rice, that explained in clear terms the financial reality of the diocese. All these are in the Addendum to this report.

The DDTF then analyzed all the survey data, compared and contrasted different people's responses, re-read all the earlier material we collected (at Convention, from congregational meetings, at the Clergy Day meeting, from Bishop Whitmore and staff, etc.), and began to draft our insights and recommendations. We finalized our draft report in mid-July in time for our meeting with the Standing Committee on July 25th.

At that meeting, the DDTF and Standing Committee reviewed, discussed and revised the Report. This document reflects that joint work and our agreement to put forward this Report to Diocesan Council on August 21-22. Finally, the DDTF is willing to help the Diocesan Council and Standing Committee prepare their final report, make sure the diocese understands that report, and create enabling resolutions for presentation at the Diocesan Convention. The Convention will decide the best way forward.

The broad outline of our timetable looked like this:

2019

- ❖ August DDTF initial meeting of Standing Committee and Diocesan Council with our Consultant. DDTF approach and members named
- ❖ November Diocesan Convention (postponed from October) where the DDTF met for the first time to create their plan and engage the Convention in initial data gathering

2020

- ❖ January DDTF met to plan congregational visits, clergy day, etc.
- ❖ January 6 to March 15 Visit every congregation for data gathering
 - Special Clergy Day for data gathering
 - Research what other dioceses are doing
- ❖ April Published the document, *Common Themes*, about our findings
Started a diocesan wide Survey
- ❖ May-June Survey data is collected. Reports received. Conversations with special groups
- ❖ July 25 Draft report to Standing Committee is approved and clarified.
- ❖ August 21-22 Final Report of the DDTF and Standing Committee to Diocesan Council is approved and an enabling resolution is prepared for Diocesan Convention
- ❖ October Diocesan Convention chooses a way forward



2. What the Data is Telling Us

Upon the retirement of the previous bishop and the resignation of the diocesan administrator, there was a huge vacuum and a steep learning curve about how to support the diocese and its congregations. The Standing Committee and others did their best to fill that vacuum and need. However, this approach leads to burnout and does not serve the diocese well for the future. We need a better way forward.

As you read in the Overview section, the data we collected came from many sources. As well, we were able to build upon the data at different stages: the congregational and other conversations informed the Survey which informed the targeted conversations with different committees.

All of this information indicates that the Episcopal Diocese of North Dakota is encountering many issues that will need to be addressed in order for us have a firm foundation from which to move forward. This section of the report outlines those issues.

Communication and Organizational Cohesion

A lack of both transparency and organizational cohesion at the diocesan level has contributed to breakdowns in communication which has in turn led to an overall mistrust in the leadership and to leadership burnout.

The Survey showed:

COMMUNICATION

- People currently get church information in three major ways:
 - via email
 - something printed in Sunday bulletin
 - Sunday information sharing by clergy/lay leaders
- Preference for information from “the Diocese or the Bishop’s Office” was
 - Posted on diocesan website
 - “information bulletin” printed for church on Sunday
 - Something printed and mailed directly to me monthly

We need to balance people able to get electronic information and people needing printed information.

The people of the Diocese of North Dakota are concerned about this lack of clear and consistent communication coming from diocesan leadership as well as communications between congregations. There is a perception of a lack of transparencies in some areas that has been exacerbated by the communication issue. We especially need transparency in finances.

We also found that communication did not get to the “people in the pews” and that better methods were needed to inform clergy and lay leadership at the congregational level and then to inform members of the congregation. Thus, there is a strong desire for an administration that is responsive and communicates well with everyone. Our survey showed that a balance between electronic and print communication is preferred to provide our information to the largest number of people.

Divisions

There are many things causing division in the diocese right now. Some primary areas of division are between eastern versus the western parts of the state, larger churches versus smaller, political divisions, and racial divisions. These divisions have caused and continue to cause a great deal of hurt to the Body of

Christ in North Dakota. There is a great deal of healing that needs to be done. The time is now to bring forward these issues, look at them honestly, discuss them and continue a process of reconciliation.

There were 100 comments about “What do you believe are the deepest divisions in the Episcopal Diocese of North Dakota?” Some comments included:

There are three major areas of division in the diocese: The division between large church congregations and small ones. The division between Native American congregation and non-Native American congregations. Lastly distance from north to south and from east to west.

Our deepest division is also our longest division as a people that share a common geography. Our Indigenous Congregations are in Sovereign Nations where significant animosity exists towards the dominant society in North Dakota. There are deep levels of historic trauma that effects the generations of families in both the dominant culture and the Indigenous Nations. I don't have a sense that the dominant culture is aware of its own trauma based attitudes and that often gets communicated with phrases like "I didn't do those things." "Those are old, we need to leave them behind and move on now." "Why do the Native Congregations get financial support from the Episcopal Church and we don't?" A secondary division is that of the larger congregations and the smaller ones and who has the control over diocesan held resources.

I think most of our issues happen because we aren't meeting often enough, and that we are unfamiliar with the leadership of other congregations. The better we know each other, the more effective we are in doing God's work.

Racial: indigenous/non-indigenous relations are the most prevalent, but also the deepest historically. They are embedded in our state and diocese's story, and the stories are rarely told by those most affected. Create space for non-indigenous congregations to hear the stories from indigenous congregations and to build community through worship and fellowship. This cannot be the translation of indigenous history through non-indigenous voices. The second major division (economic) arises directly out of the first. The resolution of these divisions will take root in authentic relationship.

Local Ministry Development

There is also hope for moving forward, shown by the desire of the people in this diocese for further training and ministry development. Lay ministry is still seen as an important aspect to our diocese. People are familiar with the concepts of Total Ministry, of ministry discernment and of empowering the laity. The survey data shows there is a willingness among congregants to attend trainings both by traveling as well as online. Such training should use an existing model (either from within or outside the diocese – “don’t re-invent the wheel”) and be financed through some shared model between the individual, the congregation and the diocese.

Rebuilding Relationships

There is also a desire for more relationship between Episcopalians in the diocese, including a hope for meeting together more meaningfully and regularly. While many of our congregations are quite a distance from each other, which can result in a sense of isolation, people are willing to travel and there is also openness to Diocesan-wide gatherings beyond once-a-year Conventions as well as online options and/or virtual events with other congregations, such as Zoom meetings. While there was a lack of vitality and a sense of exhaustion in many of the churches, there is also a desire to be together as Episcopalians. We want to know other leaders, have the Convention be more about sharing and building community than about business and find other ways to gather and be in community together.

Youth Ministry and Leadership Pipeline

The Survey – One Relationship Comment

We have gotten away from conventions with workshops that dealt with common needs and issues in all our churches. We used to learn, and knew more about other parishes by how we shared at meetings. We don't know much about each other anymore. I know there is no money for face to face meetings but we need an alternative way of being together. I am too old to like Zoom, etc but I guess it is the way we need to do things. Another word about workshops. This is how we share ideas and prime the pumps for local thinking. If someone goes to a meeting, workshops are how they share what they learned and they can throw out ideas that local people may never have considered. We tend to be isolated and we compound our isolation by not sharing what we do know.

A desire for the further development of youth ministry will be imperative to the future of the church in North Dakota. This was brought up consistently as something important for us to consider. Developing leaders from our young people seems to be a wise investment in an increasingly aging diocese. Thus, *How do we do youth ministry better?* People acknowledged that not every congregation can have a “youth program” but there was disappointment in the lack of diocesan events or activities for youth and for training in youth ministry.

We also need to be thinking about a “leadership pipeline.” Some of our current leaders seem to “do it all” and have been for many years. This can lead to – or has led to – burnout. It also prevents new ideas, insights and energy from coming into leadership roles. The Survey allowed people to express their willingness to step-up and help.

The survey showed:

MINISTRY DEVELOPMENT

- A, if not THE, diocesan priority should be to strengthen the lay leadership of each congregation
- Most congregations had some experience with “Local Discernment for lay ministry” and overwhelmingly favored such a program
- Most congregations had some experience with “Local Ordination – helping the congregation discern who might be called to serve their congregation as a priest or deacon” - and overwhelmingly favored such a program
- Most congregations had some experience of “Team Ministry – helping congregations form a team of lay and ordained leaders to fulfill various ministry roles, such as preacher, worship leader, sacramentalist (person whose only role is to preside at the Eucharist), pastoral caregiver, Christian educator/formation person; outreach coordinator, etc.” - and overwhelmingly favored such a program
- Regarding making these things happen:
 - First preference was “Provide on-line training with some regular in-person gatherings for training”
 - Next was “Create regional training groups with regular meetings”
- Regarding financing such training programs:
 - First preference was “Equally shared by the diocese, congregation and the individual”
 - Next was “50% by the diocese and 50% by the congregation”

Episcopal Leadership and Timeline

Episcopalians want a bishop. The data we collected shows a preference for a bishop in some form, but not yet through an election and not full-time. Surveyors chose first:

- “A part-time bishop whose role would be primarily pastoral and liturgical with the development and support of congregational leadership resting solely in the hands of members of the diocese.”

The next preference was for:

- “A part-time bishop whose task is to facilitate support for and development of congregational leadership with the actual work being done by people from within the diocese.”

A need for strong leadership was expressed. However, such leadership needs to reflect a “team” approach, combining lay leadership as well as ordained leadership working with a bishop, not for a bishop.

The data also supports that we take the time needed for this transition, by re-envisioning the structure and the episcopacy before settling on the best model forward or electing a bishop. A trial/transition period of three to five years is the most supported idea.

As we analyzed the data, it seems apparent that our current model of hierarchy is no longer working effectively in North Dakota. Our approach to organizational structure needs to turn the current hierarchy upside down, recognizing the importance of lay leadership, with the diocese, administration and bishop supporting the ministry of the congregations and each person, as they are the Body of Christ.

There is hope that a restructuring would lead to better communication and collaboration, boost morale and increase trust within the diocese. People are exhausted, but also want to move from just being viable to being a vital church. We need to find some ways to **re-start** our life in the vitality of Christ’s love for us and not just **re-form** what we already have in place.

The Survey showed:
Bishop and Timeline
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A time of transition between three and five years is best for us<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A part-time bishop• A leadership model that is about shared ministry



3. Priorities for Mission and Ministry

We do not want to return to “the good ‘ole days” but rather have a **new vision** for how to be the Church in a **new day**.

The clear preference was NOT to have a bishop who came to “lead or help us” but for a leadership model that would accept our vision of the priority being “bottom up leadership.”

Using the data we have just described and which we collected through congregational visits, the survey and meeting with various diocesan committees, the Task Force has identified several priorities for the mission and ministry of the diocese going forward.

Bottom-Up Approach

It is clear that the model for mission and ministry needs to be a bottom-up approach rather than the traditional, top-down, hierarchical model. Leadership would look like an upside-down pyramid.

This means that the priority of time, energy, administration, and finances need to be for the support and development of leadership - lay and ordained - at the congregational level. In order to achieve this, there is a strong need for systems that support congregations. Priorities could include things like:

- Connecting congregational leaders across congregational borders
 - Connect worship leaders about new ideas for worship
 - Discuss ways to bring music to all congregations
 - Support the ministry of LEMs
 - Sharing models of Ministry Teams
 - Finding ways to relieve administrative burdens on leaders
- Training in lay leadership and ministry (we talk about a School for Ministry in the Structure section of this report). While many congregations already have lay ministry teams, we should work towards every congregation having lay persons involved in preaching, leading worship, providing pastoral care, helping with Christian formation, organizing outreach, etc.
- Ensuring that congregations have access to clergy and the Eucharist at least once-a-month
- Supporting and creating opportunities for clergy collegiality

However, we also acknowledge that “we have been here before.” We found historical documents (see Addendum - Historical Actions by the Diocese) that span 1989 through 2006 that suggest many of the same approaches were part of a report. Many members

of the Task Force and the diocese told us stories of efforts to support Team Ministry, Total Common Ministry, Ministry of the Baptized, etc. The research done for the Task Force by

Addendum - *Reimagining the Church in North Dakota* (page 28)

Concluding Thoughts

The Diocese of North Dakota faces challenges, but they are challenges that some dioceses have already faced. They are also challenges that all dioceses will one day face. North Dakota has the opportunity to discern what models of diocesan and episcopal leadership best empower its communities to more fully embody the Gospel in their contexts. The interviews have suggested four different models that are alternative to a traditional episcopate. All these models can be structured to empower the ministry of the baptized, but for any of these models of episcopal leadership to accomplish that goal, it must also be paired with a new model of diocesan leadership that invites congregations to reimagine themselves as a “*participants or stakeholders*” in the mission of God, rather than a “*consumers or recipients*” of the spiritual services. Reimagining diocesan and episcopal models of leadership incarnationally can, as other dioceses have shown, cultivate communities of discipleship and more fully embody the Gospel in our context.

the Rev. Joe Hubbard (see Addendum - *Reimagining the Church in North Dakota: Towards Communities of Discipleship through an Incarnational Episcopate*) both reminded us that these approaches to ministry have been around for awhile and that, throughout the whole church, there is exciting and renewed interest in pursuing these models today.

Thus, the Task Force is concerned: **How can and will North Dakota do this differently this time?** What specific suggestions or organizational design is going to make this time different? While we address these issues in the following sections, the real test will be the resolve, energy, excitement, prayers, and support of our sisters and brothers in Christ in our diocese.

Leadership Pipeline

The leadership pipeline needs to be expanded by bringing in new people from a wide variety of ages, locations and backgrounds. Four people indicated in their Survey responses that they were willing to help. Other individuals have spoken with members of the DDTF about being willing to step in. The work of Amy Phillips and Dan Rice on diocesan finances (see Addendum - *Summary of 2019 Income, Assets, and Expenses of the Episcopal Diocese of North Dakota*) is an example of people – when asked – stepping up to help this process.

However, some comments and “the way the church works” indicate two challenges that need to be addressed:

1. Will the people “who have always done it” allow new people into leadership positions and, when they “do it differently,” still stay out of the way?
2. Will the work we ask people to do be more than “busy work” or “window dressing” and actually be part of creating change in the diocese?

Youth (and Young Adult) Ministry

Attention to a strong youth ministry program would also contribute to the leadership pipeline. There was enthusiasm heard from some about what they do with youth and from others who were unsure what to do. So, a ministry priority should include finding ways to do youth ministry better. Let’s find ways to create or revive diocesan events or activities for youth and for training in youth ministry. Some also nudged us to expand this to include young adults and to use social media as ministry tools to bring the knowledge of God’s love to this population.

Administration for Ministry, mostly at the local level

Another priority suggested by the data is improved administrative function. As we noted earlier, the time after the bishop retired was difficult. If anything, it showed us that a proper diocesan administrative structure is needed. There is an urgent need for improved communication from the diocese and among the individual congregations. The administration’s first priority should be making sure every congregation has a variety of contact people; that there is clarity about the kinds of communication (electronic, paper, web-based, FaceBook, etc.) that are most helpful to each congregation; that there is a schedule and system for regular communication; etc.

The diocesan administration might also seek ways to ease the administrative burden of congregations. Might we centralize what clergy are available for supply? Or create a schedule for supply clergy to serve congregations so that each one has Eucharist on a regular basis? Could we outsource the payroll for all clergy, as is done in other dioceses, and relieve congregations of that administrative burden?

Addendum - Financial Report:

Summary of 2019 Income, Assets, and Expenses of the Episcopal Diocese of North Dakota
(page 15)

Finally, the Diocese seems to lack a clear sense of mission and purpose, not to mention an actual plan, to guide the use of the resources at its disposal. It is the responsibility of leadership to make this happen. In the case of an Episcopal Diocese, this responsibility rests primarily with a Bishop (whether part-time, full-time, or other status). In partnership with a Bishop, the clergy and lay leadership share in that responsibility. Our present situation calls out for the restoration of this shared leadership in our Diocese. It is our hope that this report will assist the Task Force as it moves forward with that restoration.

Again, it is about putting a good system in place and maintaining it. We are confident that many members of the diocese and of the congregations support this effort and will work to make it happen.

There needs to be greater transparency in financial matters that would better allow the budget to be based on identified needs for the ministries of the diocese. Amy Phillips and Dan Rice’s financial report (see Addendum - *Summary of 2019 Income, Assets, and Expenses of the Episcopal Diocese of North Dakota*) underscores the need for streamlining and simplifying the number of accounts, special funds, etc. There needs to be documented clarity about what funds can be used for what purposes so that diocesan leaders and the Convention can put our resources to the best use. Yes, it may be helpful to have savings for a “rainy day” but we are of the opinion that that day has arrived and the next three to five years need to see funds put to use for congregational ministry and for solutions for the future.

Addendum - A Brief History of the Episcopal Diocese of North Dakota

(page 1)

Only by understanding each other and our stories do we grow and become closer as part of the body of Christ. We may need to think of our past but let us more so look towards the future. God has always been with us and is working in each of us even now.

The story of the Episcopal Church in North Dakota is reflected in the history of the state, the confluence of our cultures, including Native American, European, and Sudanese from East Africa. The history of North Dakota is influenced by its geography, location, and climate, which includes remoteness, dependence, economic disadvantage, oil boom and bust, and agrarianism. But it is God who has brought us all together.

So we ask: **What is God doing in North Dakota?**

Healing Divisions

The final priority for the mission and ministry of the diocese is to begin the healing of our divisions. The long-standing divisions in the Diocese of North Dakota have the ability to weaken us as a diocese and as a faith community. There are many facets to the divisions including:

- large versus small congregations
- east versus west cultures and congregations
- the historic and cultural differences between congregations that are:
 - Native American
 - Sudanese
 - predominantly white

We also heard that the diversity of our diocese was identified as a strength. Thus, we need a process and a commitment towards reconciliation. Even just the short, *A Brief History of the*

Episcopal Diocese of North Dakota (see Addendum) reminds us of hopes but also struggles; promises but also broken promises; secular history and sacred history; and the role of the church – national and local – in creating who we are today as the Episcopal Church.

Strong, inclusive, and collaborative leadership will allow the diocese to begin to address and eliminate these divisions. We envision a “circle model” of such leadership where everyone at the table is an equal and has a story to tell. This is different from someone sitting “at the head of the table.” Sure, there may need to be a leader or a facilitator, but that person needs to be able to sit as one among equals at this kind of table.

We have acknowledged our exhaustion and burnout. Thus, bringing on a paid consultant to help structure and launch opportunities for people of different cultures to tell their stories might be helpful. Models for reconciliation exist throughout the church and we do not need to re-invent the wheel. However, whatever we decide should work for North Dakota and our unique situation. It may also be that the COVID-19 pandemic has a positive side: the use of technology to connect people.



4. Diocesan Structure

We do not want to return to “the good ‘ole days” but rather have a **new vision** for how to be the Church in a **new day**. The clear preference was NOT to have a bishop who came to “lead or help us” but for a leadership model that would accept our vision of the priority being “bottom up leadership.”

After considering all the data and becoming clear about what people wanted as the priorities for mission and ministry, the DDTF continued its discernment process. We considered what organizational structure would best help the diocese to set itself upon a firm foundation in the next three to five years.

As a small diocese, we need to utilize resources - both financial and human - to maximize the impact of ministries and programs while avoiding burnout and fatigue. We propose that all programs, committees and positions be assessed to determine whether they meet these criteria. We believe that the structure of the diocese should support the priorities determined by the research of the DDTF.

Staffing Recommendations

The administrative staff would include a part-time (one-quarter to half-time) **Transitional Provisional Bishop** who would be appointed for a time certain of three years, renewable for an additional two years depending on the progress the diocese makes in the transition. Because the resources (political and financial) and energy that might be spent on a search and election would be better spent discerning the final structure of the diocese and its leadership, the Transitional Provisional Bishop would be recommended by the Presiding Bishop in collaboration with the Province VI Bishops and elected and Called by the Convention or Standing Committee of the Diocese of North Dakota. A “position description,” reflecting the desire of the diocese for a bottom-up or grassroots approach to vision and ministry for the diocese, will help define the gifts and skills we seek for this bishop.

As well, the title for this position is intentional:

- This is a **Transitional** position that is meant to help the diocese through the next three to five years; this bishop will help us transition to supporting congregations and their leaders; and this bishop will help us discern how best to support the small number of congregation in North Dakota in the future.
- This is a **Provisional** position as a bishop. This usually means a bishop who is either “retired” or concurrently holding another Episcopal post (such as in a neighboring diocese), who serves as the bishop of a particular diocese during a bishop’s vacancy in that diocese. Our provisional bishop will serve for an agreed period of time and will be authorized to exercise all the duties and offices of the Bishop of the Diocese — but both at the pleasure of the diocese's Convention and/or Standing Committee.

Title III, Canon III.13 of the Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church: Canon 13: Of Dioceses without Bishops (2018)

Sec. 1. A Diocese without a Bishop may, by an act of its Convention, and in consultation with the Presiding Bishop, be placed under the provisional charge and authority of a Bishop of another Diocese or of a resigned Bishop, who shall by that act be authorized to exercise all the duties and offices of the Bishop of the Diocese until a Bishop is elected and ordained for that Diocese or until the act of the Convention is revoked.

Sec. 2. Any Bishop may, on the invitation of the Convention or of the Standing Committee of any Diocese where there is no Bishop, visit and exercise episcopal offices in that Diocese or any part of it. This invitation may include a letter of agreement, shall be for a stated period and may be revoked at any time.

Sec. 3. A Diocese, while under the provisional charge of a Bishop, shall not invite any other Bishop to visit and exercise episcopal acts or authority without the consent of the Bishop in charge.

- This is a **Bishop**. She/he will bring all the liturgical, pastoral, spiritual, prayerful, and administrative skills we expect from a bishop. However, as only part-time, we will have to be sensitive and thoughtful about how best to use his/her time and energy. Again, the focus will be to support our congregations.

The second and third members of the staff would be a full-time, ordained **Diocesan Minister** and a full-time **Administrative Assistant** (Note: might be, part-time if financial duties are outsourced). These positions need people with strong organizational, communication, and technology skills. They will continue and expand the work to oversee and build an administrative structure that supports congregations through:

- Regular communication via weekly website posts, a diocesan newsletter, email “blasts,” etc.
- Good data management of congregational and clergy contacts
- Ensure website maintenance
- Provide clarity about diocesan policies and procedures
- Work with an out-sourced accountant with additional oversight by the treasurer and finance committee to handle financial matters

Other duties for the **Diocesan Minister** would include working closely with the Transitional Provisional Bishop to discern and implement support to congregations, lay leaders and clergy. This should include:

- Being available on Sundays to be with congregations who are without regular clergy
- Coordinating supply clergy for congregations
- Working with leadership in the diocese to re-establish/re-vitalize the School for Ministry (see below for more details)
- Clarity about being a “team member” with the bishop, clergy and lay leaders of the diocese, but also being able to facilitate and make things happen
- Structure and support diocesan efforts at Reconciliation working with a consultant

We would also like the diocese to consider a position for a part-time **Youth Minister**. This will depend upon the amount of energy and interest in youth ministry and the availability of funds.

Formal *Letters of Agreement* will outline more specifics for each position. It will be important to be clear “who is in-charge” and who supervises the staff. Since the Transitional Provisional Bishop comes with normal diocesan and Episcopal authority, she/he will oversee that staff.

But, since that position is part-time, we recommend that the Diocesan Minister have most of the supervisory responsibilities.

Using the Wisdom in the Diocese

We propose that the Diocesan Council consider structuring their membership to represent more congregations. While we do not want to burden the already stretched leadership further, we believe that more direct connections to congregations would be helpful. We invite Council to consider ways to ensure greater participation and representation of the parishes as well as improved communication between and among the diocese and the individual parishes.

Another important element in the structure of the diocese is the **committee structure**. All committees should be reviewed in terms of membership, purpose, term limits, and representation so they can be restructured, if necessary, to fit the present and future context of the diocese and its ministries.

Finance Committee

We recognized that all issues around finances need to be brought to the diocesan Finance Committee for review and accuracy.

The DDTF and SC agreed to ask the Finance Committee to look at staffing and funding at their August 8th meeting. The results are below.

The Survey showed:

Most congregations were familiar with and overwhelmingly favored a “Team Ministry approach... helping congregations form a team of lay and ordained leaders to fulfill various ministry roles, such as:

- ✓ Preacher,
- ✓ Worship leader,
- ✓ Sacramentalist (person whose only role is to preside at the Eucharist),
- ✓ Pastoral caregiver,
- ✓ Christian educator or formation person;
- ✓ Outreach coordinator,
- ✓ Etc.”

Support and Training

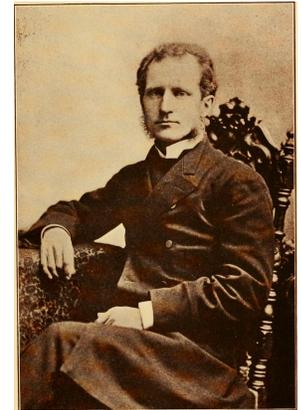
In order for the diocese to be structured using a bottom-up or collaborative model, there is a strong need for training in lay leadership and ministry. A **School of Ministry** needs to be re-established and strengthened to provide training and ministry development for interested members of the laity as well as continuing education for locally ordained clergy. The training would ideally also provide opportunities for local ordination so that the diocese is eventually able to reach the goal of having sufficient clergy to allow every congregation to have Eucharist at least once a month. The Survey data shows that most people (27%) are willing to travel between 41 and 100 and the next most (24%) would travel more than 100 miles for a training.

Finances

Today, the finances of the diocese seem strong.

However, there is a need for more transparency, a change in the way financial resources are directed, and a thoughtful consolidation of the many accounts currently reported. We also understand that many members of the diocese expressed frustration about the way the financial reports have been presented.

The DDTF asked Amy Phillips and Dan Rice to take on the task of reviewing and “making sense” of the diocesan finances. Amy is an active member of St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church, Fargo, and is a university faculty member; Dan is a member of the Diocesan Finance Committee, the Diocesan Council, an active member of St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church, Fargo, and a former university faculty member and Dean. They wrote in their “Financial Report: *Summary of 2019 Income, Assets, and Expenses of the Episcopal Diocese of North Dakota*” (see Addendum, page 13),



We note that Bishop William Hobart Hare, the first bishop of the Missionary Diocese of Niobrara (1873), “studied at the University of Pennsylvania but never graduated. He studied for the ordained ministry on his own.”

“The Episcopal Diocese of North Dakota has more than adequate resources to carry out its current level of operations. Within these resources, the Diocese holds funds that are not donor restricted and could potentially be repurposed if the Council decided to do so.”

Their report shows at least \$1.2 million is available from unrestricted, reserve accounts and from the unrestricted endowment. They note:

In addition, “The Episcopal Diocese of North Dakota Trust and Endowment Fund Spending Policy” (2016) permits year-to-year spending of up to 8.5% of the previous “three-year moving average” of the market value of the TEF. The three-year average of the most recent three years is approximately \$3 million. Therefore, the Diocese could draw around \$255,000 for the 2021 budget and stay in conformity with the policy. (page 13)

We are not suggesting “Spend, Spend Spend!” But we do believe that finances need to be allocated based on the priorities of the mission and ministry of the diocese. Thus, funding the new staffing model, allocating resources for diocesan administration and congregational support, including the School for Ministry and youth ministry, and our efforts at reconciliation and healing our divisions should not be a burden over the next three to five years given our resources. These are the items we noted in the **Priorities for Mission and Ministry** section of our report.

At the same time, we believe the diocese needs to ask the difficult question: With fewer than 20 congregations, is having a separate Episcopal diocese and bishop financially viable and the best use of resources? Thus, part of our recommendations (Options for the Future) will include using the next three years to look at other options for the people and congregations in North Dakota.

DDTF Difficult Question

At the same time, we believe the diocese needs to ask the difficult question: With fewer than 20 congregations, is having a separate Episcopal diocese and bishop financially viable and the best use of resources? Thus, part of our recommendations (Options for the Future) will include using the next three years to look at other options for the people and congregations in North Dakota.

The Finance report notes:

As a final comment, our purpose is not to suggest which resources should be utilized or how much should be spent from them, but simply to make clear the resources potentially available for future spending....

Finally, the Diocese seems to lack a clear sense of mission and purpose, not to mention an actual plan, to guide the use of the resources at its disposal. It is the responsibility of leadership to make this happen. In the case of an Episcopal Diocese, this responsibility rests primarily with a Bishop (whether part-time, full-time, or other status). In partnership with a Bishop, the clergy and lay leadership share in that responsibility. Our present situation calls out for the restoration of this shared leadership in our Diocese. It is our hope that this report will assist the Task Force as it moves forward with that restoration.

Staff Positions and Position Descriptions:

NOTE: The DDTF and Standing Committee agree that the following positions are a priority and should be funded. Draft position descriptions are attached at the end of this report in Section 9.

Transitional Provisional Bishop – Fund at part-time (one quarter to half-time). Oversight by Standing Committee

Diocesan Minister – Fund at full-time. Oversight by TPBp

Administrative Assistant – Fund at full-time (might be, part-time if financial duties are outsourced*)
Oversight by Diocesan Minister

Consultant to work on Reconciliation – Fund as a consulting position for 18 months

[***Accountant** (Out-Sourced) – If Administrative Assistant is full-time then these accounting and financial responsibilities will be part of his/her position description.]

Diocesan Youth Minister - The DDTF and the Standing Committee agreed that this position could be helpful if diocesan funds are available. It is also possible that a grant might be received for this position from the Episcopal Foundation.

Episcopal Diocese of

North Dakota



5. Diocesan Leadership

We know some of what we are stating here has already been said in the Diocesan Structure section. However, since so much of our Episcopal life has centered around the “bishop” we feel it is helpful to have a separate section around this position and

other aspects of leadership for the diocese.

We were blessed to contract with and receive the research and report from the Rev. Joe Hubbard: *Reimagining the Church in North Dakota: Towards Communities of Discipleship through an Incarnational Episcopate*. He notes right from the start:

In short, it seems clear from the research conducted that the church is facing imminent change. The old models of church leadership seem to not serve all diocese equally. As Bishop Mark Cowell of the Diocese of Western Kansas says, “There is a change coming in the Episcopal Church. It will hit some of our dioceses – like Western Kansas and North Dakota – before it hits the moneyed diocese on the East and West coasts, but when their endowments run out, they will be looking to us to help them re-imagine what it means to be the church.” (Page 1)

Joe’s report clearly sets out what some other dioceses have done and are doing. He presents both historical and theological insights about the church doing something different during these challenges times. He summarizes four models at the outset of the report. The full descriptions are on pages 19 to 28.

From the interviews, four different models of diocesan and episcopal leadership emerged as alternative models to the traditional episcopal model. Each of these models seems to respond differently to the needs of the diocese, with the part-time bishop focused more on sustaining the *viability* of the diocese, in particular providing a more traditional episcopal presence in the face of limited resources. The other models – the multi-jurisdictional bishop, the episcopacy by council, and the transitional assistant bishop – all in different ways reach for a more “incarnational model” of diocesan leadership that seeks to collaborate with congregations to more fully embody the reign of God. These are models that seem to prioritize the *vitality* of a diocese as God’s expression of the Gospel in a particular place. No one model seems to offer a complete solution for North Dakota. (Page 2)

Circular Model of Leadership

Unlike the way we normally think of leadership, as one person telling others what to do, circular leadership is about engaging everyone to find the way forward. It is spherical in nature, rather than hierarchical. In this way of seeing things, a great leader is an expression of their collective, or the circle of people working together, not its star. If done well a leader should oversee, guide, and represent the collective vision. But the right person for that role might also change as the group’s needs change. At times, we may need a confident and outspoken leader to power us through a tangled passage, but other times we need the leader who quietly sees the network of connections within the whole. Sometimes we need a leader who hangs back so another may practice stepping forward, challenging us to be better than we think possible. Circular leadership ultimately recognizes the circle itself as the teacher; that the true wisdom is in the circle.

There is a genius that can only be found in our coming together, and it’s our combined abilities that elevate and strengthen us. True humility doesn’t mean making yourself smaller, but recognizing that we are all the same size: a child of God, necessary and vital, living in a community of children of God. Is this not what Jesus did in his ministry with the disciples and into what the Holy Spirit invites us?

Adapted from : <https://tokopa.com/2018/06/05/circular-leadership/>.

See also the Rev. Joe Hubbard’s Report in the Addendum: *Reimagining the Church in North Dakota: Towards Communities of Discipleship through an Incarnational Episcopate*

We strongly recommend that everyone read Joe's report to get an excellent baseline about where the Episcopal Church has been and is now with regard to leadership models for dioceses and for bishops.

We looked at all the models and decided that - for right now - the best way forward is to propose that the Presiding Bishop, in collaboration with the Province VI Bishops, recommend a candidate to the diocese as a part-time **Transitional Provisional Bishop**. That individual, elected and Called either by Convention or the Standing Committee, would serve for three years, renewable for an additional two years if the diocese is still in discernment as to what the episcopate in North Dakota should become. There would be a ministerial review each year. This period of three to five years would allow the diocese to get our "house in order" and strengthen the leadership of our congregations while continuing the discernment process.

It is important that the individual chosen "walks humbly with her/his God" and would be in relationship with the people of the Diocese of North Dakota rather than solely exercising authority over us. The person chosen needs to understand and accept the concept of circular leadership and be able to support the structure put in place to achieve that goal.

The key roles we envision for this bishop are:

- Pastoral care for clergy
- Liturgical and personal presence to congregations
- Supporting diocesan administration's central role of supporting our congregations and their leaders
- Helping us chart a course to look at our options for Episcopal leadership beyond the next three to five years (See the *Options for the Future* document in the Final Recommendations section).
- Support diocesan efforts at Reconciliation

We recommend that the circular leadership model be collaborative rather than hierarchical and focus on a bottom up rather than a top-down style. We might see some representatives from an expanded Diocesan Council assisting the bishop as part of a "leadership team."

Special attention will be given to identifying and developing potential leaders in youth and young adult ministry with the goal of expanding the leadership pipeline.

We wonder about the possibility of a part-time Youth Minister position if there is sufficient interest/energy from the diocese as well as funding available.

Administratively the bishop would be supported by a full-time, ordained Diocesan Minister with strong administrative skills and a full-time administrative assistant.

We are moving toward a relationship-based model rather than continuing the hierarchical model of most of our brethren. Relationship will lead us to reconciliation, as genuine relationship requires that the parties be "truly present" with one another and listen deeply and from the heart.



6. Options for the Future

The Diocesan Discernment Task Force (DDTF) and the Standing Committee agree to take three to five years to set out our structure, with an emphasis on congregational development. Instead of going through an Episcopal election, we believe our time should be spent on making our administration more robust, supporting our congregations, encouraging Total Ministry, addressing divisions identified, finding Episcopal leadership that works for us, and doing God's work. A Transitional Provisional Bishop will serve our current needs during this time.

However, during that first three years we need to discern the best way forward for an Episcopal leadership model. We want the Transitional Provisional Bishop to help us chart a course through the Episcopal Church's rules, expectations, old forms and new realities.

DDTF/SC agree that we also need to ask the difficult question:

With fewer than 20 congregations, is having a separate Episcopal diocese and bishop financially viable and the best use of resources?

While we ask and answer that question, we should know our options. As we've mentioned, Joe Hubbard's report, *Reimagining the Church in North Dakota: Towards Communities of Discipleship through an Incarnational Episcopate* (see Addendum) suggests four models for Episcopal leadership (page 19-28). That report sparked us to discuss different options and ideas. We present the following options, which we were not able to explore fully but hope we will explore in the next three years:

1. Changing the size and makeup of our diocese. This could develop in several ways, such as:
 - a. See if we might annex congregations in northern Minnesota (many smaller congregations, closer to us than to their own diocesan offices) to form a larger diocese
 - b. See if the southern portion of Standing Rock, now in South Dakota, might join us and unify these Native American congregations
 - c. Another option would be reforming and joining a new Niobrara Diocese
 - d. Might we dissolve the diocese and let each congregation join the diocese they neighbor, such as eastern congregations joining Minnesota, Native congregations and others joining South Dakota, and western congregations joining Montana
2. Sharing a bishop with an Episcopal neighbor:
 - a. Is the Diocese of Minnesota needing a Suffragan Bishop that could also serve as a part-time Diocesan Bishop for North Dakota?
 - b. Are there other possible shared Episcopal ministries?
 - a. with Manitoba?
 - b. with South Dakota?

3. Sharing a bishop with the ELCA –
Is there a desire by either the Eastern or Western ELCA Synods in North Dakota to share a bishop with our diocese? If there is such a need or desire, how would it be structured?

4. Native Indigenous Bishop –
Is there a desire to call an Indigenous Bishop to serve the Native congregations that could develop into a non-geographic diocese?

Thus, over the next three years we need to find the best ways to be in conversation with these bishops and their lay and ordained leadership. We need to see if there is any interest in sitting down and discussing realities around finances, ministry, care of buildings, etc. and see if God might be doing some sort of a “new creation” in the midst of our challenges.



7. Final Recommendations and Timeline

As you have seen in our Report the DDTF and Standing Committee have some recommendations and some options for how we might structure ourselves in the next three to five years. We have summarized these, by priority, into the following bullet-points and brief descriptions. Many of the details are found in the Report and will need to be expanded and finalized by the whole diocese.



Communication and Organizational Cohesion: Establish and re-organize the diocesan office to serve the congregations through communication and responsive structures. This will require staffing: A full-time **Diocesan Minister**; a full-time **Administrative Assistant**; a consultant for Reconciliation; and a possible part-time Diocesan Youth Minister;



Local Ministry Development: The priority for the resources, energy and time of the diocese will be to support and strengthen leadership at the local level. The key components for this will be the *School for Ministry*; movement towards congregational Ministry Teams in all congregations; opportunities for local ordination; training and networking opportunities for congregational leadership teams and members, etc.



Divisions and Rebuilding Relationships: Our divisions prevent us from fully becoming and being the Body of Christ as the Episcopal Diocese of North Dakota. While we will not “solve” racism or prejudice, if we do not engage these issues and divisions they will rot the core of our life together. We want and need an intentional way to get to know each other, to tell our stories and to express our hurts/hopes across congregational borders. We agree to hiring a consultant - someone to work intentionally with diocesan leaders for 18 months to structure and launch such things.



Youth Ministry and Leadership Pipeline: We need to find ways to engage with youth on a diocesan level. While not every congregation could or should have a “youth program” we believe that there should be a diocesan effort to bring young people (and young adults) to know the Love of God in Christ. All the social media tools used by young people surely need to be included in this effort. This effort is also part of looking at creating a pipeline for new leadership: we need intentional ways to invite and enable new voices and energy into our leadership circles.



Episcopal Leadership and Timeline: We recommend the adoption of a “circular model” of leadership. One part of that circle should be a part-time Transitional Provisional Bishop for at least three and up to five years. We will consult with the Presiding Bishop and our Province VI Bishops about the priorities for the position and possible candidates. Either Convention or the Standing Committee can call this person and complete a *Letter or Agreement* and position description. Besides the usual Episcopal duties of a bishop, we ask this person to also help us navigate all the *Options for the Future* beyond three years.

We also want to make sure the diocese pays attention the following considerations.



Financial Considerations: The good news is that the diocese has significant financial resources to be able to fund and do most of what we are suggesting for the next three to five years. This will allow us to get our congregations on a firmer foundation. However, the bad news is whether a diocese with 20 or fewer congregations is sustainable beyond three to five years. Even with support from the General Convention of the Episcopal Church for Native American ministry, we have to look at other options. As we mentioned before, the Finance Committee of the diocese will need to review our report, our “numbers,” and our recommendations about staffing.



Options Looking to 2023-25: The Episcopal Church across the country is looking or will need to look at new models of being “church” in the 21st Century. Fortunately, there are models – Biblical, theological and practical - that can help North Dakota decide the best way forward. The DDTF and SC agree that we need to look at these and other models and **decide no later than Convention 2023** what is the best way forward.

Timeline

We suggest the following “target dates” for doing the work we propose.

2020

- | | |
|---------|---|
| July | Standing Committee agreed to begin exploration of the position and candidates for Transitional Provisional Bishop (TPBp). We ask the Finance Committee to have the budget reflect these changes, especially as they apply to staffing. The Diocesan Minister position will wait for the TPBp. The Administrative Assistant position will wait for the TPB and Diocesan Minister to decide together. |
| August | Diocesan Council adopts/adapts this Report. We continue the process to call a TPBp. Be sure the budget reflects these changes, especially as they apply to staffing. Decide if staffing process needs to wait for the TPBp or if we should move forward now. Review a plan for pre-Convention events to help the diocese understand this report and Convention Resolutions to implement the Report. |
| October | Diocesan Convention adopts (or could modify or reject) the recommendations of the report. If adopted, Convention could call the TPBp, if this step is ready, or it can empower the Standing Committee to make the call or it can plan for a Special Convention to make the call. |

NOTE: During this time there are **parallel tracks** being worked on by the diocese:

- Strengthening congregations and their leadership

AND

- Beginning the work around the diocese's *Options for the Future*

2021

January	TPBp is called and on board. Complete search for all staff positions. Winter “Zoom Events” begin to get to know one another across congregational borders. Planning starts for <i>Diocesan Summer Youth</i> programming.
February	Diocesan Reconciliation efforts start on Ash Wednesday, February 17 th .
March	Latest date for the Diocesan staff to be in place and working.
April	<i>School for Ministry</i> is fully established and first “class” meets after Easter Sunday, April 4 th . Formal start of discerning <i>Options for the Future</i> and discussions with all the organizations and people mentioned.
July	First “ministry review” with the TPBp and diocesan leadership.
October	Diocesan Convention receives first report about progress. Initial report on and discussion about <i>Options for the Future</i> .

2022

Start intentional Diocese-wide process to consider in *Options for the Future*

“Ministry review” with the TPBp and diocesan leadership.

2023

“Ministry review” with the TPBp and diocesan leadership.

October	Diocesan Convention decides which <i>Option for the Future</i> to adopt and starts process to implement by December 2025.
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8. Addendums

All of these documents are available at:

<https://ndepiscopal.org/diocesan-discernment-task-force-ddtf/>

- a. **The Rev. Joe Hubbard's Report:** *Reimagining the Church in North Dakota: Towards Communities of Discipleship through an Incarnational Episcopate*
- b. **Amy Phillips and Dan Rice's Financial Report:** *Summary of 2019 Income, Assets, and Expenses of the Episcopal Diocese of North Dakota*
- c. **Historical Actions by the Diocese**
 - I. Partners in Ministry \$\$\$ campaign booklet 1995 plus
 - II. Mission Strategy 1989
 - III. Mission Goals & Strategy 1990
 - IV. Mission Goals & Strategy updated 1993 & 1998
 - V. Report of the 2006 Task Force on Mission and Reorganization
- d. *A Brief History of the Episcopal Diocese of North Dakota*, Carmine Goodhouse and John Baird

9. Draft Position Descriptions



Position Description for the Transitional Provisional Bishop Episcopal Diocese of North Dakota

[Please refer to *Report of the Diocesan Discernment Task Force and the Standing Committee* for details and expectations for this ministry.]

Overview:

The Episcopal Diocese of North Dakota will call a Transitional Provisional Bishop (TPBp) to serve for three years, renewable for an additional two years if the diocese is still in discernment as to what the episcopate in North Dakota should become. This period of three to five years would allow the diocese to get our “house in order” and strengthen the leadership of our congregations while continuing the discernment process. There will be a ministerial review (“How are we doing?”) each year.

It is important that the individual chosen “walk humbly with her/his God” and be in relationship with the people of the Diocese of North Dakota, rather than solely exercising authority over us. The person chosen needs to understand and accept the concept of circular leadership and be able to support the structure put in place to achieve that goal.

The key roles we envision for this bishop are:

- Pastoral care for clergy
- Liturgical and personal presence to congregations
- Supporting diocesan administration’s central role of supporting our congregations and their leaders
- Helping us chart a course to look at our options for Episcopal leadership beyond the next three to five years (See the *Options for the Future* document in the Final Recommendations section)
- Support diocesan efforts at Reconciliation

The position will be supported by a Diocesan Ministry Team approach to ministry. There will be two paid, full-time staff:

- Diocesan Minister
- Administrative Assistant (might be, part-time if financial duties are outsourced)

Circular Model of Leadership

Unlike the way we normally think of leadership, as one person telling others what to do, circular leadership is about engaging everyone to find the way forward. It is spherical in nature, rather than hierarchical. In this way of seeing things, a great leader is an expression of their collective, or the circle of people working together, not its star. If done well a leader should oversee, guide, and represent the collective vision. But the right person for that role might also change as the group’s needs change. At times, we may need a confident and outspoken leader to power us through a tangled passage, but other times we need the leader who quietly sees the network of connections within the whole. Sometimes we need a leader who hangs back so another may practice stepping forward, challenging us to be better than we think possible. Circular leadership ultimately recognizes the circle itself as the teacher; that the true wisdom is in the circle.

There is a genius that can only be found in our coming together, and it’s our combined abilities that elevate and strengthen us. True humility doesn’t mean making yourself smaller, but recognizing that we are all the same size: a child of God, necessary and vital, living in a community of children of God. Is this not what Jesus did in his ministry with the disciples and into what the Holy Spirit invites us?

Adapted from : <https://tokopa.com/2018/06/05/circular-leadership/>.

The title for this position is intentional:

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- This is a **Transitional** position that is meant to help the diocese through the next three to five years; this bishop will help us transition to supporting congregations and their leaders; and this bishop will help us discern how best to support the small number of congregation in North Dakota in the future.
 - This is a **Provisional** position as a bishop. This usually means a bishop who is either “retired” or concurrently holding another Episcopal post (such as in a neighboring diocese), who serves as the bishop of a particular diocese during a bishop’s vacancy in that diocese. Our provisional bishop will serve for an agreed period of time and will be authorized to exercise all the duties and offices of the Bishop of the Diocese — but both at the pleasure of the diocese’s Convention and/or Standing Committee.
 - This is a **Bishop**. She/he will bring all the liturgical, pastoral, spiritual, prayerful, and administrative skills we expect from a bishop. However, as only part-time, we will have to be sensitive and thoughtful about how best to use his/her time and energy.
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I. The Transitional Provisional Bishop - Time

We plan for the TPBP to be in the Diocese every month for approximately seven to ten days. Thus, the position will be between one-quarter and one-half time, though we are flexible in order to support the person called. The schedule will be primarily for what works for and at the discretion of the Bishop. A typical schedule will include time in the Diocese with no more than 6 weeks between visits. A rolling 6 month calendar will be made in consultation with the President of the Standing Committee, the Diocesan Minister and the Administrative Assistant. This will enable planning and coordination for meetings, congregational visits and events up to six months in advance.

The TPBP will be available as necessary for telephone, Zoom teleconferencing and email communication while away from the Diocese. These communications will mostly be for coordination with the Diocesan Ministry Team and in preparation for planned visitations.

II. The Transitional Provisional Bishop - Ministry

Pastoral Care is the heart of any ordained ministry. The TPBP will provide pastoral care and support, first to the clergy and then to the congregations.

Liturgy: With just 20 congregations, the TPBP will connect with each congregation about twice in a 12 month period. Depending upon the COVID-19 pandemic, these connections could be electronic, in-person, in regional gatherings, etc. In addition, there are congregations that expect annual confirmation and the Bishop also may be requested for Holy Days or special events in the life of any congregation, subject to availability.

Administration: The Diocesan Ministry Team will meet monthly and work to create a design and schedule that works for all concerned, including creating the above liturgical schedule. In light of being part-time and of our concept of “circle leadership” the Bishop, the Diocesan Ministry Team and the Standing Committee will work together to decide the best use of the bishop’s administrative time. This might or might not include presiding at regular meetings of the Diocesan Council (typically held in November, March and August); meetings with the Commission on Ministry, the North Dakota Council on Indian Ministries and the Standing Committee.

The TPBP will preside at the Diocesan Convention (held in the middle of October in Bismarck). The Bishop typically presides at the Convention Eucharist with preaching to be determined. The agenda and program for Convention and other Meetings will be worked out with the Diocesan Ministry Team, President of the Standing Committee and Vice Chair of the Council.

III. The Transitional Provisional Bishop - Options for the Future

We believe the diocese needs to ask the difficult question: With fewer than 20 congregations, is having a separate Episcopal diocese and bishop financially viable and the best use of resources? During the next three years, the TPBP will help the diocese work through the recommendations set forth in the document, “Options for the Future.”

This will be especially true for conversations with neighboring dioceses, other Bishops, the ECUSA structure, etc. The expectation is that the Diocesan Convention of 2023 will consider and vote on the “best way forward.”

IV. The Transitional Provisional Bishop – Reconciliation

The TPBp will support the work of reconciliation and the consultant called to work in this area. During all the TPBp’s interactions with the diocese we ask that one eye is kept on the ministry of reconciliation.

IV. The Transitional Provisional Bishop – Other

The Diocese will cover the cost and time of attending the House of Bishops’ Meetings if the TPBp chooses to attend them.

There is a diocesan Bishop’s Discretionary Fund which the TPBp will oversee in coordination with the Diocesan Minister.

This will be a “spiritual call,” with the diocese and the TPBp entering into a covenant relationship which is based upon and informed by the work of the Diocesan Discernment Task Force’s report. If either the diocese or the bishop are in disagreement concerning the interpretation of this Position Description or the final *Letter of Agreement*, either party may appeal for mediation by a mutually agreed upon third party, the Presiding Bishop remaining the final arbiter.



Position Description for the Diocesan Minister

Episcopal Diocese of North Dakota

[Please refer to *Report of the Diocesan Discernment Task Force and the Standing Committee* for details and expectations for this ministry.]

Overview:

The Episcopal Diocese of North Dakota will call a full-time Diocesan Minister to serve as a key part of a Diocesan Team Ministry with a Transitional Provisional Bishop (TPBp). The diocese is entering a transition period of three to five years that will allow us to get our “house in order” and strengthen the leadership of our congregations while continuing the discernment process for the best way forward. This call is for a minimum of three years, renewable for additional years depending on how the diocese decides to move forward.

It is important that the individual chosen “walk humbly with her/his God,” be an ordained Episcopal priest, enjoy being in relationship with the people of the Diocese of North Dakota, and fully embrace the concept of “team ministry.” The person chosen also needs to understand and accept the concept of circular leadership and be able to support the structure put in place to achieve that goal.

The key roles we envision for the Diocesan Minister are:

- Discern and implement the diocese’s administrative support to congregations, lay leaders, and clergy
- Structure and support communication and events that help strengthen congregational leadership, lay and ordained
- Work with leadership in the diocese to re-establish/re-vitalize the School for Ministry
- Be available on Sundays to be with and work with congregations
- Have clarity about being a “team member” with the bishop, clergy, and lay leaders of the diocese, being just one of the members of the leadership circle, but also being able to facilitate and make things happen (see side box)
- Structure and support diocesan efforts at Reconciliation, working with a consultant

The position will be supported by a Diocesan Ministry Team (DMT) approach to ministry. In addition to the Diocesan Minister there will be:

- An Administrative Assistant (full-time, but might be part-time if financial duties are outsourced)
- A Transitional Provisional Bishop (part-time, between one-quarter and half-time)

Circular Model of Leadership

Unlike the way we normally think of leadership, as one person telling others what to do, circular leadership is about engaging everyone to find the way forward. It is spherical in nature, rather than hierarchical. In this way of seeing things, a great leader is an expression of their collective, or the circle of people working together, not its star. If done well a leader should oversee, guide, and represent the collective vision. But the right person for that role might also change as the group’s needs change. At times, we may need a confident and outspoken leader to power us through a tangled passage, but other times we need the leader who quietly sees the network of connections within the whole. Sometimes we need a leader who hangs back so another may practice stepping forward, challenging us to be better than we think possible. Circular leadership ultimately recognizes the circle itself as the teacher; that the true wisdom is in the circle.

There is a genius that can only be found in our coming together, and it’s our combined abilities that elevate and strengthen us. True humility doesn’t mean making yourself smaller, but recognizing that we are all the same size: a child of God, necessary and vital, living in a community of children of God. Is this not what Jesus did in his ministry with the disciples and into what the Holy Spirit invites us?

Adapted from : <https://toko-pa.com/2018/06/05/circular-leadership/>.

Understanding the TPBP position - the title is intentional:

- This is a **Transitional** position that is meant to help the diocese through the next three to five years; this bishop will help us transition to supporting congregations and their leaders; and this bishop will help us discern how best to support the small number of congregations in North Dakota in the future.
- This is a **Provisional** position as a bishop. This usually means a bishop who is either “retired” or concurrently holding another Episcopal post (such as in a neighboring diocese), who serves as the bishop of a particular diocese during a bishop’s vacancy in that diocese. Our provisional bishop will serve for an agreed period of time and will be authorized to exercise all the duties and offices of the Bishop of the Diocese — but both at the pleasure of the diocese's Convention and/or Standing Committee.
- This is a **Bishop**. She/he will bring all the liturgical, pastoral, spiritual, prayerful, and administrative skills we expect from a bishop. However, as only part-time, we will have to be sensitive and thoughtful about how best to use his/her time and energy.

I. The Diocesan Minister (DM) - Time

This is **the** full-time position for the diocese. As with other priests in the diocese, we expect her/him to do the ministry as necessary, while also being available during “off hours.” Thus, the position requires a person with gifts for time-management as well as self-care.

Though we plan for the TPBP to be in the Diocese every month for approximately seven days, the Diocesan Minister will run the day-to-day operations of the diocesan administration. Obviously, some weeks will be more intense than others and we expect the DM to coordinate the overall work schedule in coordination with the rest of the DMT.

The TPBP will call and oversee the person filling this position.

II. The Diocesan Minister - Ministry

Communication and Organizational Cohesion: The DM will call and supervise the Administrative Assistant. Together with the TPBP they will establish and re-organize the diocesan office to create an administrative structure that supports congregations through:

- Regular communication via weekly website posts, a diocesan newsletter, email “blasts,” etc.
- Good data management of congregational and clergy contacts
- Website maintenance
- Clarity about diocesan policies and procedures, including functions such as Transition Ministry and Sexual Misconduct officer
- If necessary, work with an out-sourced accountant with additional oversight by the treasurer and finance committee to handle financial matters

Local Ministry Development: The priority will be to support and strengthen leadership at the local level. The key components for this will be to work with others in the diocese to:

- Revitalize the *School for Ministry* with training and networking opportunities for congregational leadership teams and members
- Move towards Ministry Teams in all congregations, helping them to identify people with gifts for ministries such as preacher, worship leader, sacramentalist, pastoral caregiver, Christian educator/formation; outreach, etc.
- Identify opportunities for local training/formation for ordination
- Create a system to coordinate supply clergy for congregations, so that all congregations have Eucharist at least once a month
- Be available on Sundays to be with congregations: bring the energy of “team ministry” to them, build positive relationships between “the diocese” and the congregations, and, where they are without regular clergy, celebrate the Eucharist.

Divisions and Rebuilding Relationships: Help (not do it all) identify a person, create a structure and support the work of a consultant for reconciliation. We want and need an intentional way to get to know each other, to tell our stories and to express our hurts/hopes across congregational borders.

Youth Ministry and Leadership Pipeline: Help (not do it all) the diocese find ways to engage with youth on a diocesan level. This may involve calling and supervising a part-time Youth Minister.

Help (not do it all) the diocese create a pipeline for new leadership: we need intentional ways to invite and enable new voices and energy into our leadership circles. This will include reviewing our existing committee structure and recommending adjustments.

Options for the Future: Help (not do much of this) the diocese and the TPBp ask the difficult question: With fewer than 20 congregations, is having a separate Episcopal diocese and bishop financially viable and the best use of resources?

III. The Diocesan Minister – Other

Finances: Help (not do much of this) the diocese review and appropriately enact the recommendations of the addendum to *Report of the Diocesan Discernment Task Force and the Standing Committee* entitled, *Summary of 2019 Income, Assets, and Expenses of the Episcopal Diocese of North Dakota*. This may include supporting grant requests, reporting and oversight of such grants and other duties as needed.

Compensation and Benefits: Compensation will be designed to be competitive and to attract excellent candidates. Benefits will follow diocesan guidelines that provide for health benefits, vacation and sabbatical time, business travel reimbursement and professional expenses.

This will be a “spiritual call” with the diocese and the TPBp, with all parties entering into a covenant relationship which is based upon and informed by the work of the Diocesan Discernment Task Force. If either the diocese or the Diocesan Minister are in disagreement concerning the interpretation of this Position Description or the final *Letter of Agreement*, either party may appeal for mediation by a mutually agreed upon third party, Standing Committee remaining the final arbiter.



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*The DDTF Report as Amended and
Approved by Council*

For presentation to

The 50th Annual Convention

of the

Episcopal Diocese of North Dakota