

Report of the New Season of Ministry Task Force



**Prepared for the 53rd Annual Convention of the
EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF NORTH DAKOTA**

September 2023

Following The Way of Love

I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. - Ephesians 3:17-19

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Introduction

The 2021 Diocesan Convention authorized the Bishop and Diocesan Council to establish a New Season of Ministry Task Force. This was to continue the work of the Diocesan Discernment Task Force, whose report was accepted at the 2020 Diocesan Convention and to set our work in the context of The Way of Love. This Way, as Bishop Curry reminded us at last year's Convention, is inspired by the life and ministry of Jesus and those first disciples whose lives, *"were centered on Jesus Christ and committed to living the way of God's unconditional, unselfish, sacrificial, and redemptive love."*

Our task force, listed below, was appointed in April 2022. We adopted our purpose as the following items:

1. To build on the work of the Diocesan Discernment Task Force
2. To identify/document/name current realities as a diocese
3. To define our foundation and uniqueness as Episcopalians and a diocese
4. To reimagine and explore all possible options for the structure, mission and finances of the Diocese of North Dakota and its congregations
5. To determine the best transformational options for the Diocese of North Dakota and its congregations
6. To make recommendations to Diocesan Council and Diocesan Convention for the future of the Episcopal Diocese of North Dakota beyond 2024

Please read through our report which concludes with the recommendations for which we ask approval. Our task force has spent many hours meeting, in person and via zoom, hearing from many congregations and individuals, within and outside our diocese. The strength of our diocese and commitment of individuals has been uplifting. We prayerfully have developed this report and its recommendations as investment of our time and resources, people and finances, to continue us into the next season of our ministry together, showing the love of God and love for each other.

Faithfully, **New Season of Ministry Task Force**

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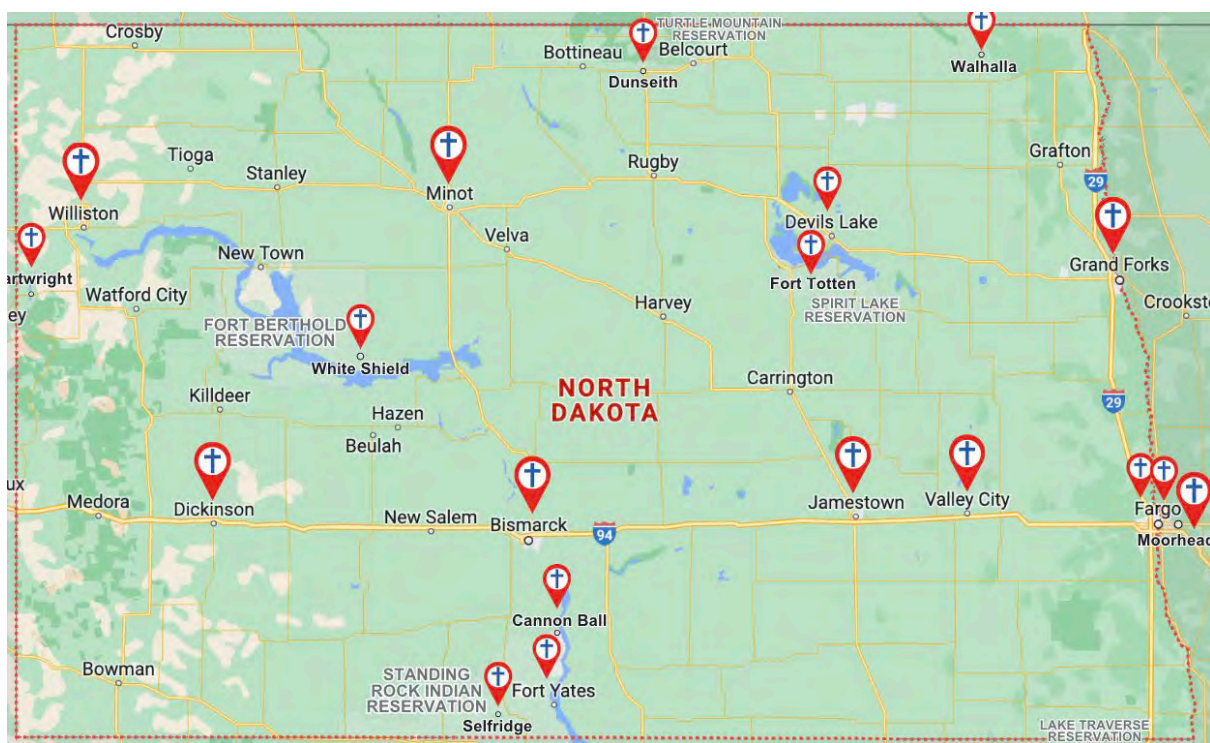
The Rev. Hal Weidman (moved)

Who We Are – 2023

Congregations

The Episcopal Diocese of North Dakota is a small diocese covering a large geographic area including the whole State of North Dakota and Clay County, Minnesota. There are currently 19 congregations (see chart and map below); some are small and fragile; six are located on Native American reservations* and one is predominately Sudanese^. The most current Parochial Report statistics (2022) for 18 of our 19 congregations show a baptized membership of 2,236, communicants in good standing of 1,462, and an average Sunday attendance of 452. The 2022 Pledge and Plate revenue for the 18 congregations totaled \$852,395 which included 209 pledging units. The total 2022 reported operating revenue was \$1,272,518.

This map shows where congregations are found in our diocese:



The following chart breaks down some of the numbers above by congregation for both 2022 and 2021:

	Adult Communicants in Good Standing	Adult Communicants in Good Standing	Average Sunday Attendance	Average Sunday Attendance
Congregation	2022	2021	2022	2021
Advent, Devils Lake	15	20	15	11
All Saints, Minot	16	12	9	10
All Saints, Valley City	3	4	4	3
Church of the Cross, Selfridge*	13	5	0	0
Gethsemane, Fargo	219	225	109	87
Grace, Jamestown	51	50	24	28
Saint George's, Bismarck	198	201	37	32
Saint James, Cannon Ball*	37	15	36	5
Saint John's, Dickinson	11	20	4	7
Saint John's, Moorhead^	219	261	38	47
Saint Luke's, Fort Yates*	75	80	13	8
Saint Michael & All Angels, Cartwright	18	17	12	13
Saint Paul's, Grand Forks	83	90	46	46
Saint Paul's, White Shield*	20	20	38 (Easter only)	29 (Easter only)
Saint Peter's, Walhalla	14	10	12	No report
Saint Peter's, Williston	11	10	3	5
Saint Stephen's, Fargo	220	210	44	36
Saint Sylvan's, Dunseith*	No report	0	No report	15 (2 services)
Saint Thomas, Fort Totten*	10	24	8	11
Totals	1,233	1,274	452	393

What Congregations Value

In the course of our conversations with congregations and with diocesan leaders, it became abundantly clear that there are many things that are valued by the members of our congregations. These five stand out:

1. A desire for full sacramental ministry
2. Quality preaching
3. Attentive pastoral care
4. Shared/collaborative leadership (not top down)
5. Strong community connections and involvement

These values underscore the importance of both clergy and lay leadership and the need to develop additional leadership capacity, and they contribute significantly to the formation of our task force's recommendations.



Leadership

Five congregations are served by settled, compensated priests for ¾ time or more: Saint George's, Bismarck; Gethsemane, Fargo; Saint Stephen's, Fargo; Saint Paul's, Grand Forks; and Grace, Jamestown. Non-stipendiary deacons also serve in each of these congregations. Currently, three Native American congregations (Saint James, Cannonball, Saint Luke's, Fort Yates and Church of the Cross, Selfridge) and Camp Gabriel on Standing Rock share one full-time priest, and two non-stipendiary deacons (one Indigenous and one Anglo); two of the three other Native American congregations (Saint Paul's, White Shield and Saint Sylvan's, Dunseith) are served by part-time priests. Currently, the Northwest Ministry Coordinator, the Diocesan Minister, other seminary trained clergy (some ELCA), locally trained clergy and five non-stipendiary deacons provide sacramental and some pastoral support to nine of our congregations including Saint Michael & All Angels, Cartwright; Advent, Devils Lake; Saint John's, Dickinson; Saint Thomas, Fort Totten; All Saints, Minot; Saint John the Divine, Moorhead; All Saints, Valley City; Saint Peter's, Walhalla, and Saint Peter's, Williston.

The laity are especially key to the effective ministry and leadership in all congregations. Notably, several congregations without settled priests are blessed to have such capable and committed groups of lay leaders: Church of the Advent, Devils Lake; Saint John's, Dickinson; Saint Thomas, Fort Totten; All Saints, Minot; All Saints, Valley City, and Saint Peter's, Williston. Also distinguished are the deacons, wardens and other local leaders in congregations like Saint George's, Bismarck; Saint James, Cannon Ball; Saint Michael and All Angels, Cartwright; Saint Sylvan's, Dunseith; Gethsemane and Saint Stephen's, Fargo; Saint Luke's, Fort Yates; St. Paul's, Grand Forks; Grace, Jamestown; Saint John's, Moorhead; Church of the Cross, Selfridge; St. Peter's, Walhalla, and Saint Paul's, White Shield, all of whom play a vital, prominent, and powerful role in their congregations and beyond. Many of these leaders hold leadership roles in the diocese in addition to their local roles. The Bishop Provisional generally visits each congregation on a regular basis.

As a diocese we often express a strong commitment to mutual ministry and shared leadership. Clearly this commitment is more solidly expressed in some congregations than in others. The need to strengthen that dimension of our common life is an important finding from our conversations with congregations and diocesan leaders and is reflected in the task force recommendations for staffing.

Our congregations and their clerical and lay leaders support each other and are interconnected through a variety of diocesan groups:

Diocesan Ministry Support Team

The diocese is currently served by a diocesan Ministry Support Team (dMST), including a half-time Bishop Provisional, now in the third year of a three-year commitment, who travels from Vermont one week each month; a full-time Diocesan Minister, who lives in Bismarck and works from a home office; a full-time Diocesan Administrator who lives in Fargo and works out of the Diocesan Office; a full-time Ministry Coordinator for the Northwest, who is completing the second year of a two-year, largely grant-funded engagement. Because the grant funding is ending, and for other considerations, this position is not funded past the end of 2023. In addition to these dMST members, the diocese has recently contracted for bookkeeping services on a part-time basis.

Diocesan Council and Active Ministry Groups

The work of the Diocese, between Conventions, is overseen by the Diocesan Council, working closely with the diocesan Ministry Support Team. The Diocesan Council is comprised of the bishop, six elected members of the Standing Committee, six elected members from the East Region, six elected members from the West Region, up to three members appointed by the bishop, the bishop-appointed Chancellor of the Diocese who serves ex-officio with vote, and the elected Diocesan Treasurer who also serves ex-officio with vote. The Diocesan Council meets 6-8 times each year; four are scheduled in-person meetings in various locations around the diocese and the rest via Zoom. The Council is responsible for oversight of the diocesan budget and for setting goals and priorities for the Diocese in cooperation with the diocesan Ministry Support Team.



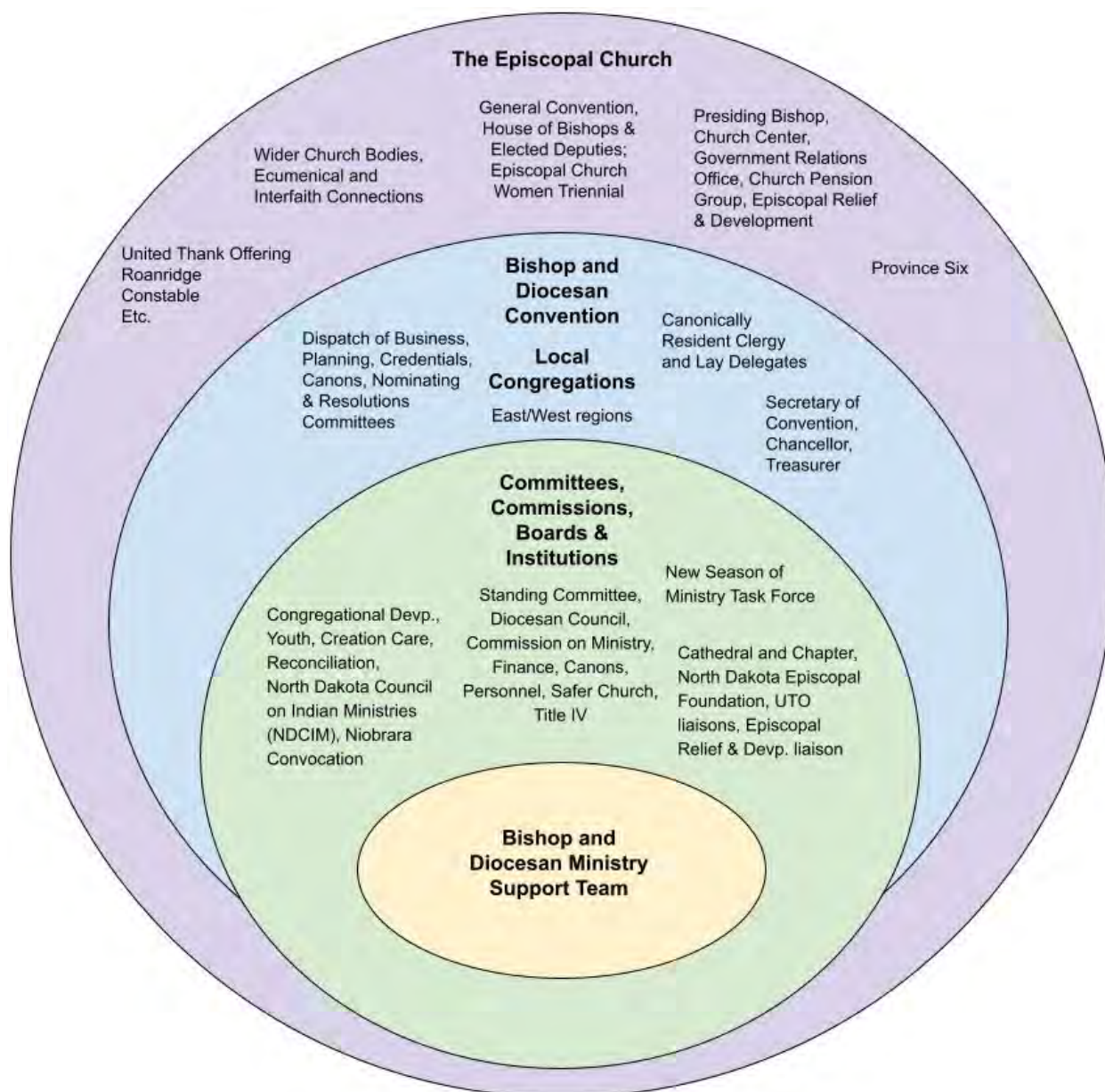
Several elected and appointed committees, commissions, task forces, foundations, and working groups provide programmatic, financial, and administrative leadership throughout the year, making regular reports to the Diocesan Council. At last count, over 50 lay members hold leadership positions in the Diocese of North Dakota, along with most of our clergy.

Currently, the following groups are active in ministry on behalf of the diocese:

- Canons Committee
- Commission on Ministry
- Congregational Development Committee
- Creation Care Committee
- Diocesan Council
- Diocesan Convention Planning Team
- Episcopal Relief and Development Coordinator
- Finance Committee
- General Convention Deputation, members serving on various church-wide bodies.
- New Season of Ministry Task Force
- North Dakota Council on Indian Ministries (NDCIM)
- North Dakota Episcopal Foundation (NDEF)
- Personnel Policy Committee including Safer Church
- Province VI Synod and Leadership Council
- Reconciliation Committee including anti-racism
- Standing Committee
- Title IV Disciplinary Board
- United Thank Offering Coordinators
- WoDakota Appeal Working Group
- Youth/Young Adult Advisory Committee



This graphic indicates the various circles of connection within our common life as a diocese and beyond:



Current Goals

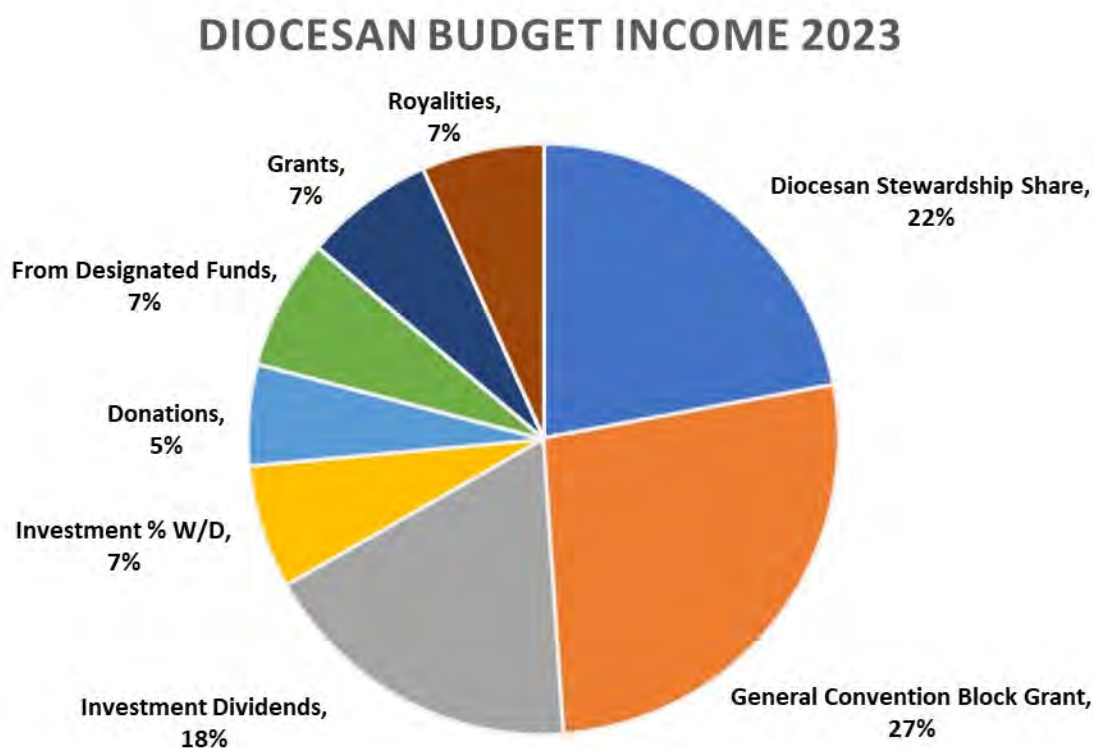
Building on the work of the Diocesan Discernment Task Force, the Diocesan Council has established priorities and goals. These help to guide the work of the Council and dMST. Three broad priorities were featured in our recent, and very successful, WoDakota Appeal: Youth/Young Adult Ministry, Native American Ministry, and Congregational Development Ministry. One of the realities and significant challenges we face, however, is the multitude of

legitimate and desirable goals and the limited human and financial capacity to do all the good ministry we envision. Many faithful and committed volunteers, as well as members of the dMST, are currently stretched very thin. In addition, we have struggled to meet the goals around developing leadership teams and sustaining sacramental ministry in small congregations, youth ministry, and reconciliation, as well as the emerging important goals associated with creation care. These will be ongoing challenges as we head into a new season of ministry, and we may need to become a bit more focused about what we can accomplish with the available human and financial resources.

Diocesan Finances

Income 2023

Current budgeted operating income for 2023 is \$913,896.



Endowment Fund Investments

At the end of the 2nd quarter of 2023, investments in the DFMS Trust and Endowment Fund were \$2,858,848.78. We currently budget an estimated 5% annual dividend of the fund value. We also budget a 2% withdrawal of the 3-year rolling fund average. With Diocesan Council approval, an additional draw of up to 2% of the 3-year rolling fund average is possible. It is of interest that the full amount budgeted is not always used.

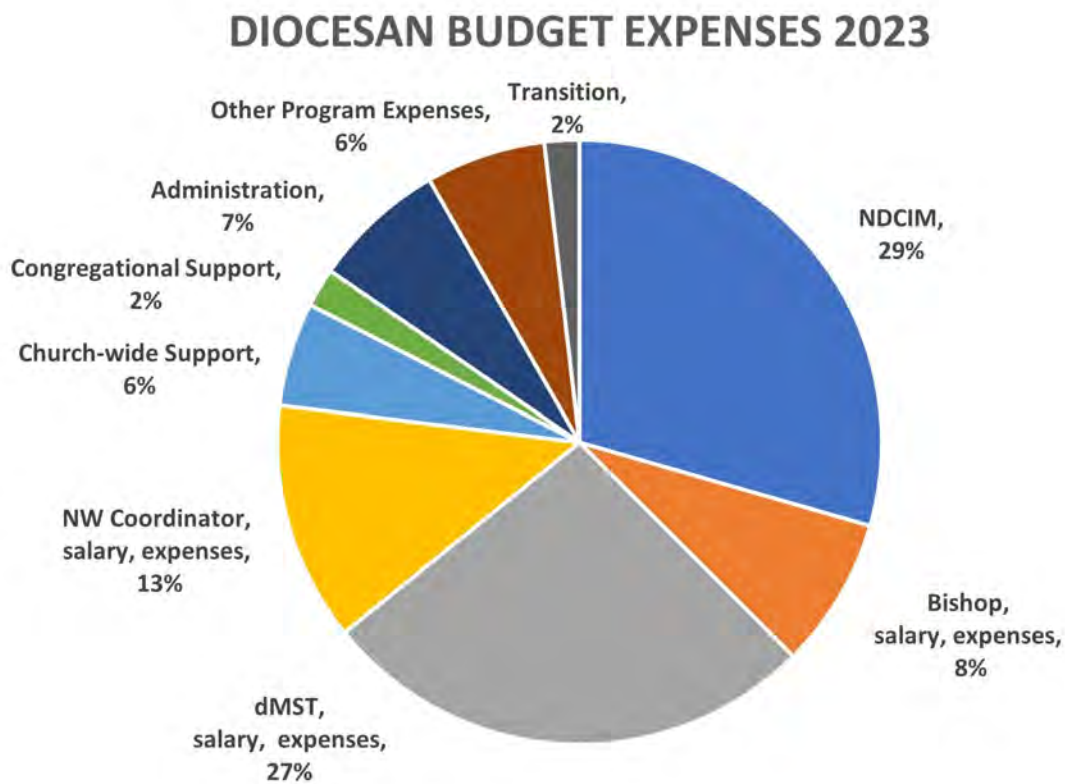
From investments, dividends and 2% draw, we budgeted \$727,302 for 2109, 2020, 2021, 2022, and we took \$457,468, meaning that we did not use \$269,834 of what was budgeted for those 4 years.

Designated and donor restricted funds currently total \$881,645.38. These funds, as the name suggests, are restricted and designated for identified ministries. Over \$450,000 of these funds are in designated grants from various sources and are in the process of being spent. Several funds are currently being drawn down for operating expenses. Some funds are being held for future designated purposes, such as General Convention, the election of our next bishop, diocesan car reserve, the Bakken Ministry Reserve Fund, and several Native American ministry initiatives.

In addition, the Diocesan Council has control over certain funds invested in the North Dakota Episcopal Foundation (NDEF) for Congregational Renewal and Revitalization (\$213,000), for Clergy sabbatical support in the Masuda Fund (\$59,000), and the Episcopal Foundation for Ministry in Higher Education (\$61,000), which is currently designated to support the Youth/Young Adult Ministry Developer position.

Expenses 2023

Current Budgeted Operating Expenses for 2023 are \$909,327.



North Dakota Council on Indian Ministries (NDCIM)

North Dakota, along with South Dakota, Alaska, and Navajoland, are the four dioceses receiving block grant funding from the General Convention budget, which is included as income in our diocesan budget. In 2023, this grant for North Dakota is \$242,900, of which \$196,510 (80%) provides stipends, benefits, and travel for clergy serving Native American congregations. Other funding from the block grant, along with additional support from the diocesan budget, supports much of the operation and program associated with our Native American ministry.



Each diocese also receives other grants, known as Indigenous Ministry Grants (formerly Sustainability Grants) awarded to help fund specific projects or ministries. These grants are not part of our diocesan budget and NDCIM determines where these funds are most needed. In the 2023-2024 cycle, the Diocese of North Dakota received \$120,000, as requested by NDCIM.

NDCIM is active in helping determine mission priorities for ministries by and among Native Americans, especially on reservations/tribal lands where our diocese is active: Fort Berthold, Spirit Lake, Standing Rock, and Turtle Mountain. NDCIM plays an important role in shaping the diocesan budget in support of these ministries, and in the oversight of various Native American designated and reserve funds.

North Dakota Episcopal Foundation

NDEF is an independent foundation, overseeing investments of more than 1.6 million dollars. NDEF provides grants for various congregational, diocesan, and mission projects from its Heritage Fund and other funds designated for specific purposes. In addition, NDEF funds are invested along with funds from two Fargo congregations in the Diocesan Pooled Investment Fund (PIF). The bishop serves as a member of the NDEF Board which is a self-perpetuating board.

Here is a snapshot of the NDEF funds:

North Dakota Episcopal Foundation (NDEF) FUNDS - Quarter 2 - 2023 - YTD totals

	6/30/23 Value
Unrestricted - held for granting	
Diocesan Heritage Fund	\$1,002,571.30

Held for specific purposes	
Fairfield Mission Fund	3,515.33
Aileen Kimball Barrow Trust	22,328.85
Charles & Helen Bailly Fund	141,504.59
Native American Seminarian	155,779.76
	<u>\$323,128.53</u>
Held for Diocesan Council	
EFMHE	61,121.04
Masuda Fund	59,045.13
Congregational Revitalization and Renewal Fund	213,835.34
	<u>\$272,880.47</u>
TOTAL of all funds	<u><u>\$1,659,701.34</u></u>

History since DDTF – 2019 – 2022

Recent efforts and activity in the diocese have led to who we are in 2023 - specifically the Diocesan Discernment Task Force recommendations that were adopted at the 2020 Diocesan Convention; they have been in varying stages of implementation since their adoption. The Diocesan Discernment Task Force was formed in 2019 after the resignation of Bishop Michael Smith in May 2019. The task began its journey by asking the question “what is God doing in North Dakota?” To address the question, various members of the DDTF visited congregations, and the task force conducted a survey to which people were encouraged to respond. After a year of prayer, consulting, and listening, the DDTF presented its report to the 2020 diocesan convention where it was adopted as a resolution. The report included a number of recommendations largely based on the information gathered in various settings from parishioners across the diocese.

The DDTF recommendations - in brief - were:

1. Establish communication and organizational cohesion.
2. Support and strengthen local ministry development.
3. Address divisions and relationships.
4. Develop stronger youth ministry and leadership pipeline.
5. Exercise Episcopal leadership through a circular model of leadership.

Some of these recommendations were implemented through the hiring of four individuals for several key positions; they have provided and continue to provide expertise, guidance and

support for ministries, congregations, committees, working groups and a range of efforts across the diocese. Some of the DDTF recommendations are being implemented by several specific strategies generated and/or supported by the Diocesan Council. The details about the individuals hired and strategies are described below.

Staffing

The position of Diocesan Administrator was developed to support and facilitate much needed communication and organizational cohesion within our diocese. The Diocesan Administrator's duties were to include coordinating and distributing regular publications, managing data, doing website maintenance, providing information and clarifying Diocesan policies and procedures as needed, and handling a number of financially related matters

A Diocesan Administrator – Jessica Thielke – was hired in April 2022. She has coordinated and compiled information for regular issues of a revitalized *The Sheaf* (produced 4-5 times annually) and the newly created *The Prairie* which provides brief but regular news (produced bi-weekly) for the diocese. Both publications address the need for improved communication in the diocese. A new diocesan website was commissioned and completed in 2022. The Diocesan Administrator also coordinates a range of diocesan events and meetings held at various locations across the state, arranging for meeting places and food and lodging for attendees and other related details. In addition, she has taken on increasing responsibilities related to financial administration and coordination. The Diocesan Administrator also functions as part of the diocesan Ministry Support Team. Although this variety of work done by the Diocesan Administrator addresses the concerns about communication across the diocese and provides a range of support for ongoing diocesan life, responsibilities ranging over three administrative components of our diocese (communication, coordination of diocesan events and activities, and involvement with the financial matters of the diocese) may be an unrealistically broad scope of responsibilities for this position and may be stretching her too thin.



The diocesan position of Diocesan Minister was created specifically to support the DDTF's recommendation to strengthen local ministry development. The recommendation grew out of the need, in the absence of a diocesan bishop, to have a person on the ground in the diocese who would do the work of getting to know our congregations and engage parishioners in discovering their gifts and identifying new ways to thrive as congregations. The Rev. Steve

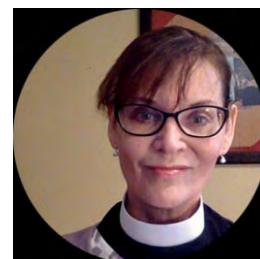


Godfrey was hired as the Diocesan Minister in May 2021. His responsibilities have expanded well beyond the role as it was initially envisioned. He presides often at the Eucharist in different congregations that do not have a resident priest, coordinates supply clergy, works with other leadership in the diocese to reestablish/revitalize the School of Ministry, serves on the diocesan Ministry Support Team, and works with other clergy and lay leaders to support and facilitate an array of diocesan activities and groups including the Commission on Ministry (COM), the

Congregational Development Committee, and the Reconciliation Committee as well as a

number of ad hoc working groups. This extensive diocesan involvement and demanding range of responsibility, has, unfortunately, led to the Diocesan Minister spending a large portion of his time traveling the state in order to fulfill this collection of responsibilities.

The position of NW Regional Coordinator for Episcopal Ministry was not a part of the DDTF recommendations, but it was created in response to a grant funded opportunity through the Roanridge Foundation. The grant did, however, provide a way to serve, develop and provide sacramental ministry for congregations in the northwest quadrant of our diocese and thus address the DDTF's recommendation to support and strengthen local ministry development. The Rev. Kim (Becker) Fox was hired in August 2021 following the award of the Roanridge grant which provides a



portion of her salary. She, too, serves on the diocesan Ministry Support Team. The focus of her work is on ministry with five congregations: Saint Michael & All Angels, Cartwright; Saint Sylvan's, Dunseith; All Saints', Minot; Saint Paul's, White Shield, and Saint Peter's, Williston. The grant proposal envisioned enabling these congregations to interact with each other for fellowship and support, to learn from one another, and to hear and respond to God's call for faithful living in five very diverse places. Over the course of the past two years, she and the rest of the diocesan Ministry Support Team have come to realize that these congregations are very different, and efforts to "coordinate" them in the way the grant anticipated have been challenging in light of the important differences among these congregations.

The DDTF recommendation to exercise Episcopal leadership through a circular model rather than the traditional top-down model ultimately resulted in the election of Bishop Provisional the Right Rev. Tom Ely, recently retired Bishop of Vermont. DDTF expected that the circular leadership style would facilitate increased unity and interaction between congregational leaders and the diocesan leadership team and encourage communication, relationship building and reconciliation.

To develop this new leadership model the Standing Committee determined that a Bishop Provisional with appropriate skills would, in addition to the traditional responsibilities of a bishop, be able serve as a coach to facilitate a new leadership style as well as helping the Diocese explore options for the long-term future of the diocese. Following his election in January 2021, Bishop Ely began his ministry as half-time bishop in February 2021 and very early he began the effort to assemble a diocesan Ministry Support Team (Provisional Bishop, Diocesan Administrator, Diocesan Minister, and Northwest Ministry Coordinator). The dMST provides the hub of the circular leadership model in our diocese. Bishop Ely works from his home in Newfane, Vermont but travels to North Dakota one week each month for in-person meetings and pastoral visitations.



This team of leaders has been well received. Additionally, Bishop Tom's role as a coach to the diocese and as a facilitator to the New Season of Ministry Task Force has been very positive and effective. Participating in the leadership of the Diocese, however, is taxing and time consuming and, at times, has stretched him well beyond half-time work. Through this experience we have

learned that we need to be attentive when we hire someone part-time to ensure that the person is not stretched beyond reasonable expectations and the resources provided to support part-time work.

Although this current team's work and accomplishments have impacted the diocese significantly and positively, the work has been very demanding. The circular leadership model requires new thinking and approaches to doing the work. In addition, fulfilling the responsibilities of these positions requires extensive travel in our geographically large state and, taken together, these factors have pushed expectations far beyond reasonable for those in these positions. Some of the recommendations from the New Season of Ministry Task Force seek to address this concern so that we might sustain and build upon the desired circular leadership model and maintain an engaging level of participation without burnout. Equally important to the continued efforts at nurturing a circular leadership is the importance of increasing lay leadership.

You are encouraged to read the narratives written by each of the four diocesan Ministry Support Team members (included in this report as the Appendix). These narratives provide important and specific details and perspectives about the work done by each of them as well as the challenges each one has encountered.

Strategies

In addition to hiring key individuals in response to the DDTF recommendations, several strategies were identified and implemented through the Diocesan Council. These strategies were especially aimed at the recommendations to strengthen local ministry development and address divisions/relationships.

One of these strategies was the formation of a Congregational Development Committee by the Diocesan Council. The committee initiated a renewal process using an outside consultant. Several congregations (Saint George's, Bismarck; Saint John's, Dickinson; Saint Thomas, Fort Totten; All Saints', Minot, and Saint Peter's, Williston) participated in at least one in-person session with the consultant. The committee continues to explore ways to strengthen congregational vitality in all of our contexts.

Another strategy to address congregational development was to revitalize the School for Ministry. That effort began with an in-person School for Ministry gathering in September 2022; approximately 17 attended including instructors and facilitators. As a follow-up to this in-person gathering a number of Zoom lectures, each addressing a specific ministry-related topic, were offered between September 2022 and April 2023; between five and ten people attended these Zoom sessions. An in-person School for Ministry scheduled for April 2023 was canceled due to

low enrollment. The revitalized School for Ministry was intended to attract lay members of the diocese and develop them for congregational ministry leadership in response to the DDTF emphasis on developing increased lay leadership in order to support vitality in local congregations. The School for Ministry is refocusing on lay leadership using one-day training events, with a preaching workshop aimed at local leaders scheduled for this fall.



In addition to encouraging congregational development, the DDTF also called for addressing divisions within the diocese and building relationships across our diocese (divisions such as race and east/west and rural/urban). The Reconciliation Committee was formed by the Diocesan Council and drew on the skills of a free consultant from the Episcopal Church to help them as a group. Through a number of meetings, the committee has been able to see where they have been and where they want to be and also see the difficulties and the challenges they will face in trying to get there.



As part of this effort, members of the group have participated in a number of trainings focused on race and reconciliation: Sacred Ground, Absalom Jones Dismantling Racism, and Owašte Wakanj Dismantling Racism. The committee has also been educating the diocese with a series of articles on white privilege in *The Sheaf*.

The Creation Care Committee, created by the Diocesan Council at the urging of several lay leaders, developed from a concern for the current reality of our climate crisis and a commitment to the Genesis Covenant¹ adopted by our General Convention in 2009. The committee has been active since its origins: hosting monthly meetings, sharing and writing articles in diocesan publications, hosting a booth and workshop at convention, seeking out and attending environmentally focused events. The committee members hope to educate members of the diocese on creation care and support congregations in creating more eco-friendly churches and strengthening environmental justice efforts.

Another recommendation from the DDTF report was to further develop youth ministry and develop a leadership pipeline for it. This effort has made limited progress. Among the Standing Rock congregations with Young Life and with St. Gabriel's Episcopal church camp, youth presence is strong and active. Additionally, partnering with the Episcopal Church of Minnesota, we were able



¹ (<https://www.ecfvp.org/tools/62/getting-started-on-the-genesis-covenant>)

to send two youth delegates and one adult leader to this year's Episcopal Youth Event in Maryland. There is, however, no widespread youth ministry across the diocese despite the desire, often articulated by people in the diocese, to reimagine and strengthen the youth presence in our congregations and diocese. The effort made this past year in the diocese to hire a part-time youth minister was unsuccessful; even though a few candidates expressed interest, the position has not been filled. Current recommendations from the New Season of Ministry Task Force seek to address this continuing need.

The DDTF recommendations and related goals were ambitious, and they stretched our capacity in a number of ways. Much progress has been made toward fulfilling some of those goals: increasing communication and organization, providing pastoral support and some initial congregational development in more rural congregations, and increasing attention to reconciliation and creation care. As we enter a new season of ministry, we must bear in mind the realities of burnout and continue to explore new ways to engage lay leaders more meaningfully in order to enable our small, but determined diocese to grow and thrive in new ways.

Our Episcopal Context

As we think about who we are and how we arrived at this point in our diocesan life, it's important to remember that we are part of the larger community we know as The Episcopal Church and that we are connected to that larger body in meaningful ways.

What is a diocese?

A diocese consists of all Episcopal churches in a designated geographic area. The Episcopal Diocese of North Dakota is made up of all the Episcopal churches in the State of North Dakota and Clay County, Minnesota.

In The Episcopal Church (TEC) there are 99 dioceses in the United States proper, plus eleven dioceses in other countries or outlying US territories, and the Convocation of Episcopal Churches in Europe.

To form a new diocese, the Constitution of TEC requires that a minimum of six congregations and six presbyters are needed to elect a bishop. To break off part of an existing diocese, no fewer than twelve congregations and twelve presbyters must remain who are qualified to elect a bishop. The Diocese of North Dakota is numerically one of the smallest dioceses in our church (Article V, Sec. 5).

What is a Bishop?

Bishop Diocesan

Normally each diocese is under the jurisdiction of a **Bishop Diocesan** who is the chief pastor of the diocese and guardian of the faith of the Church. The **Bishop Diocesan** is **elected** by the eligible, canonically resident clergy and eligible lay delegates from congregations at Diocesan Convention. The election must be affirmed by a majority of the bishops of TEC with jurisdiction and a majority of the standing committees of TEC. The Diocesan Bishop has tenure and serves until s/he resigns, dies, or is subject to some kind of ecclesiastical discipline under Title IV of the Canons and Constitution of TEC.

“The ministry of a bishop is to represent Christ and his Church, particularly as apostle, chief priest, and pastor of a diocese; to guard the faith, unity, and discipline of the whole Church; to proclaim the Word of God; to act in Christ’s name for the reconciliation of the world and the building up of the Church; and to ordain others to continue Christ’s ministry.” (BCP, 855)

A **Bishop Coadjutor** may be **elected** by and for the diocese when the Bishop Diocesan is unable to fully discharge the duties of her or his office, or in advance of her or his pending resignation. The Bishop Coadjutor has the right to succeed the Diocesan Bishop. (Title III, Canon 25)

A **Bishop Suffragan** may be **elected** by the Diocesan Convention to assist the Diocesan Bishop and to serve under the Diocesan’s direction. Unlike a Bishop Coadjutor, a Bishop Suffragan has no right of succession to the Diocesan Bishop. (Title III Canon 26)

An **Assistant Bishop** is one who is **appointed** by the Bishop Diocesan with the approval of the Standing Committee of the Diocese. The Assistant Bishop is to assist the Diocesan Bishop and to serve under the Diocesan’s direction. S/he may not serve beyond the termination of the jurisdiction of the appointing Bishop. (Title III, Canon 27)

An **Assisting Bishop** is one appointed by the Diocesan Bishop, or Standing Committee if it is the Ecclesiastical Authority in the absence of a Diocesan Bishop, to provide short-term assistance with episcopal duties in the Diocese.

A **Bishop Provisional** is a Bishop **authorized to serve a diocese** whose own bishop is unable to fulfill that ministry due to resignation, disability, death, or judicial sentence. The Convention of a Diocese may choose a Bishop of another diocese or a retired Bishop to take **full episcopal authority** until the diocese elects and consecrates a bishop of its own, or chooses to elect another Bishop Provisional. The Convention may revoke such a provisional charge at any time. (TEC website)



When a diocese is without a Bishop Diocesan or a Bishop Provisional the **Standing Committee becomes the Ecclesiastical authority.**

The process of electing a Bishop Diocesan (or Coadjutor or Suffragan) involves scheduling the ordination and consecration on the Presiding Bishop's calendar; receiving nominations for and appointing a search committee; working with a consultant from the Presiding Bishop's office; developing a diocesan profile; advertising the position; receiving nominations; arranging for canonically-required medical, psychological, and background examinations; interviewing in multiple stages; recommending a slate of candidates to Standing Committee; publishing the slate; implementing a petition nomination process, including required examinations; developing candidate profiles; conducting in-person interview opportunities throughout the diocese; holding a diocesan electing convention; and obtaining consents from a majority of Standing Committees and bishops with jurisdiction of The Episcopal Church over a set period of time. This entire process typically takes about two years.

Some Different Diocesan Models

Here are a few other dioceses we know are experimenting with different models; click on the links for more information.

Collaborations with other dioceses, involving sharing resources, perhaps even sharing a bishop and key staff and other functional roles, could help us to remain an autonomous diocese while addressing the costs of that autonomy with the limited resources available in a small diocese:

- Western New York & NW Pennsylvania share a bishop and administration - <https://episcopalpartnership.org>
- Eastern Michigan & Western Michigan are sharing a bishop and at least some administration - <https://eastmich.org/bbsc-sessions/>, <https://edwm.org/bbsc-sessions/>
- Vermont, New Hampshire & Maine are experimenting with sharing their existing 3 bishops and other resources - <https://www.episcopalnewsservice.org/2022/05/16/maine-new-hampshire-and-vermont-bishops-to-assist-each-others-dioceses/>

Given the priority on remaining an autonomous diocese, merging with another diocese does not seem like the right course for North Dakota:

- Milwaukee, Eau Claire & Fond du Lac are considering forming a single Wisconsin diocese – <https://www.episcopalwisconsin.info>
- North Texas (formerly Fort Worth) has merged into Texas – <https://edotn.org>

These examples of part-time bishops could be helpful in discerning whether to elect a full-time or part-time bishop and how that role might be defined:

- Western Kansas has a bi-vocational bishop who also serves as pastor to some congregations - <https://www.diowks.org/about-bishop-cowell>
- Eastern Oregon has a part-time bishop who does not live in the diocese - <https://edeo.org/about/>

What We Have Learned

The New Season of Ministry Task Force (NSMTF) was formed in April 2022 by Diocesan Council to continue the work begun by the Diocesan Discernment Task Force (DDTF) with a charge to continue evaluating our circumstances, to look at options and make recommendations for our future. The task force has met 12 times via Zoom and had 3 in-person, overnight meetings. Four people visited the Diocese of Northern Michigan, and there have been conversations with four other dioceses: the Dioceses of Texas, Minnesota, South Dakota and Montana. We looked at models in other dioceses as well. We had a conversation with The Rt. Rev. Todd Ousley, Bishop of the Office of Pastoral Development, who supports the Presiding Bishop and assists with deployment of bishops. We had three discussions with the Diocesan Council and had feedback from our diocesan ministry support team (dMST), consisting of the Rt. Rev. Tom Ely, Bishop Provisional; the Rev. Steve Godfrey, Diocesan Minister; the Rev. Kim (Becker) Fox, NW Regional Coordinator, and Jessica Thielke, Diocesan Administrator. Since October 2022 when our individual survey became available, we have received 62 returns. Task Force members have made congregational visits to 16 of the 19 congregations. The composition of our original group changed when the Rev. Hal Weidman left the diocese, Alesia Shaw was called to heaven, and the Rev. Harvey Henderson joined our group.

Input from the congregations, diocesan leaders, and all interested members

Based on the surveys, congregational visits and discussions with diocesan leaders in various diocesan settings, we have learned the following:

- It is vital that the Diocese of North Dakota maintain its current boundaries and identity as a diocese.
- We need to find ways and opportunities to partner with other dioceses.
- We need a full-time bishop who oversees, pastors, unifies the congregations, and represents us to the larger church. We could function with less than a full-time bishop. It is appealing financially but needs “just the right” person and at times would be difficult.
- There are ongoing challenges in the congregations but also optimism and pride in who they are. Each congregation has some unique history and undertakes several ministries to the community that may not be appreciated by other congregations. There is a feeling of energy to continue as a diocese.
- Often individuals in the congregations are focused locally and are not aware of or sure of the relevance of the diocese.
- There is strong positive appreciation for all the members of the dMST. There were a number of statements mentioning the good work done by each of the four individuals and describing how they and their work are appreciated.
- We are becoming more organized and feel more committed/connected in the diocese.



- Diocesan Council especially raised questions about the structure of the diocese. Diocesan Council seems too large. It does not feel like the east/west regions are serving a purpose and may even cause divisions. Is there a better and more equitable way to have congregations represented at Diocesan Convention including total number of lay deputies and clergy.
- Distance and amount of travel for bishop and diocesan minister are significant factors and complicate their contact and their work with several congregations.

Information from other dioceses

All of our interactions with other dioceses were preliminary and involved their bishop or a key leader. There is interest in expanding the conversations to involve more of their leadership. As we broaden discussion with one or more of these dioceses concerning an expanded relationship, we will encounter both opportunities and challenges. While we are small, there could be definite advantages to working together. Closely working with another diocese would be a new paradigm and will be of interest to the wider church.

During our trip to a visitor weekend at the **Diocese of Northern Michigan** we learned much about their ministry. There are no changes we are recommending from their model for our diocese, but a continued dialog with them would be beneficial.

- Mutual ministry is key for them – has been 30 years in the making
- Leadership is shared according to the gifts from God
- Their congregations are collaborative and focused on ministries to the community
- They are continually seeking to identify individuals' gifts
- There is a celebration of the abundance within smallness
- Their ministry is flexible and focuses on empowering/equipping people for ministry
- Serious attention is given to the ministry of all the people of God
- Church is the people of God, not just an institution
- Each congregation gives 21% to the diocese plus 60% to help pay for the missionary
- Each congregation does not have its own priest – each missionary serves four congregations and local ministry teams lead their worship and their ministry
- For their convention each congregation selects 4 delegates from among laity and clergy; those 4 have seat and vote but anyone can attend; clergy are not automatically delegates and there is no vote by orders.



Conversation with the **Diocese of Texas**

- A companion diocese of ours for a number of years
- Recently brought the former Diocese of Fort Worth into their diocese

- Desire to continue looking for ways to share with us
- They have a number of small churches and a small church network
- They like the opportunity to learn from us about Indigenous history and ministry

Conversation with the **Diocese of Minnesota**

- We expect to continue pursuing a “cultivation of friendship and mutual affection” and exploring opportunities for cooperation and collaboration.

Conversation with the **Diocese of Montana**

- Initial discussion was had about the similarity of our dioceses

Conversation with the **Diocese of South Dakota**

- Initial conversations were held and some areas of working together were discussed; Owašte Wakanj racial reconciliation program this fall is a collaborative effort with leadership from South Dakota and participation from both dioceses

Other dioceses and denominations considered

- Wyoming, Rupert’s Land, Eastern Oregon, Western Kansas and Lutheran

Office of Pastoral Development

On July 11, 2023, the NSMTF met with Bishop Todd Ousley from the Office of Pastoral Development of the House of Bishops of the Episcopal Church.

The Office of Pastoral Development provides direct support to the Presiding Bishop and the House of Bishops in the areas of Episcopal Formation and Development which provides direct support for all Episcopal elections, training and mentoring for all bishops, vocational assessment, retirement transitions, and deployment of bishops.

The Task Force affirmed two things:

1. We want to maintain our identity as the Episcopal Diocese of North Dakota.
2. We are open to cooperation with neighboring dioceses and dioceses with similar “spirit.”

Bishop Ousley explained that there are generally three options for what episcopal leadership might look like for dioceses in transition:

1. Bishop Provisional – full time or part time – episcopal authority without tenure.
2. Assisting Bishop – full time or part time - appointed by the Diocesan Bishop, or the Standing Committee in the absence of a Bishop Diocesan, to provide short-term assistance with Episcopal duties in the Diocese - as Bishop Whitmore was during our recent transition.
3. Visiting Bishop – appointed by the Diocesan Bishop to provide short-term assistance with episcopal duties in the Diocese - least common.

The NSMTF is representative of the diocese and it is our role and responsibility to look at the big picture and make a recommendation to the Diocesan Council and Convention.

There are many ways that a relationship with other dioceses can be set up. For example, if we were to enter into a relationship with another diocese with two Bishops, one would be Bishop Diocesan and the other could be Bishop Provisional in our diocese.

Our Diocesan Structure

In the course of our work, we heard some concerns about the current diocesan structure. These concerns would need to be addressed with canonical changes. As we discussed these issues as a small group, we did not have ready answers and so we have not made specific recommendations for structural changes for this convention. Any specific recommendations for diocesan restructuring would need to be proposed by Diocesan Council or by a congregation or a diocesan committee such as the Canons Committee and eventually offered as resolution(s), to be voted on at a future Diocesan Convention. The current areas for potential consideration include:

1. Regions – At one time we had three and now have two regions in the diocese. Their function has diminished and changed over the years. Their only current function is to elect regional representatives to the Diocesan Council. They could be eliminated if not needed.
2. Diocesan Council – Currently it is made up of as many as 24 members: 6 – Standing Committee members, 3 - ex officio members – Bishop, Treasurer, and Chancellor, 12 regional members (6 from east, 6 from west), up to 3 members appointed by the bishop. This is a lot of members for a diocese with 19 congregations. Perhaps there is a way to make it smaller and more efficient. Possible ideas include not including Standing Committee as part of the Diocesan Council and finding ways to keep equitable representation for various congregations – by size, ethnic makeup or rural and urban.
3. Diocesan Convention – Questions have been raised about the number of lay delegates and if all clergy are automatically delegates. Currently, we establish the number of lay delegates per congregation using a formula based on the number of communicants in good standing from the annual parochial report. All canonically resident clergy in good standing have seat and voice at Convention, but only canonically resident clergy in good standing and actively engaged in the Diocese in a ministry recognized by the bishop have voice and vote.
4. DSS – The Diocesan Stewardship Share is a responsibility of every congregation in the diocese and is paid to support the diocese. The policy was established by the Diocesan Council but without a penalty for nonpayment.

Recommendations from the New Season of Ministry Task Force

The following recommendations grow out of the New Season of Ministry Task Force's work over the past eighteen months. They are informed by earlier sections of this report including conversations the Task Force had in sixteen of our nineteen congregations as well as the results of the diocesan survey to which those in our diocese were invited to respond many times during this past year. These recommendations are also informed by our discussions as a task force in light of what we heard and read from people across our diocese. As a task force we urge your thoughtful reading of the material offered in this report and your prayerful and thoughtful consideration of these recommendations which are intended to provide the next step on the pathway to a stable and meaningful diocesan future.

- A. Invest in remaining one diocese:
 1. Maintain identity as the Episcopal Diocese of North Dakota
 2. Elect a part-time Bishop Provisional for another 3 years with specific mission charge to:
 - a) Support goals
 - b) Support the dMSTeam, evaluate and discern future staffing needs
 - c) Support collaborations/cooperation with other dioceses
 - d) Prepare for election of Bishop Diocesan (part-time or full-time TBD) no later than the end of 2026
- B. Invest in Goals/Priorities for the next 3-5 years and evaluate on an annual basis (at a minimum):
 1. Develop Youth/Young Adult Ministry
 - a) Establish presence on college campuses
 - b) Cultivate youth leadership pathways
 - c) Raise awareness and support local congregational efforts for youth/young adult ministry initiatives.
 - d) Pursue ecumenical connections (e.g., Young Life)
 - e) Address liturgical opportunities to more fully engage youth/young adults.
 2. Develop Native American Ministry
 - a) Address local/diocesan needs for leadership
 - b) Connect to church-wide initiatives related to Boarding Schools and other issues.
 - c) Identify Indigenous perceptions of church
 3. Develop Congregational Ministry
 - a) Identify members of our diocese with gifts and skills to be ordained for sacramental ministry on a diocesan-wide basis.
 - b) Identify and support locally trained, ordained, and commissioned ministers, especially for small congregations.
 - c) Explore possibilities for local ministry team development.

4. Develop Reconciliation and Creation Care Ministry
 - a) Continue building on current efforts and communicate more widely.
 - b) Expand education related to these areas (e.g., Doctrine of Discovery, Dismantling Racism, Indigenous creation teachings, resources for environmental awareness, liturgical resources, sustainable energy opportunities)
 - c) Encourage connections between congregations
- C. Invest in Staffing to Align with Goals and review structure annually:
 1. Continue funding for full-time Diocesan Administrator
 2. Commit to 3-Year funding for a full-time Diocesan Missioner (formerly Diocesan Minister) for Diocesan Ministry Development and Administration in advance of the election of a Bishop Diocesan.
 3. Commit to 3–5-Year funding for a full-time Missioner for Youth/Young Adult & Congregational Ministry Development
This position will support and serve various long-term goals, including sacramental support for congregations, youth/young adult ministry, Native American ministry (in particular Saint Thomas, Fort Totten) and other congregational development.
 4. Commit to 3-5-Year funding for a full-time Missioner for Reconciliation, Creation Care & Congregational Ministry Development.
This position will support and serve various long-term goals, including sacramental support for congregations, Native American Ministry, in particular Saint Paul's, White Shield; Saint Sylvan's, Dunseith, and Reconciliation, and Creation Care. This is a refocus of the Northwest Ministry experiment, based on what we have learned these past two years, and builds on the ministry of the current Northwest Coordinator.
 5. Reallocate General Convention block grant funding and increase annual budget approximately \$150,000 by making strategic use of additional withdrawals from trust endowment; use of other diocesan assets such as designated reserve funds; use of other funds invested in NDEF such as congregational renewal and revitalization, and contributions from congregations benefitting from these ministry positions.
- D. Invest in collaboration/cooperation with other dioceses:
 1. Continue to explore and engage in opportunities for cross-diocesan collaboration and cooperation in mission and ministry (e.g., youth EYE participation with Minnesota, South Dakota Racial Reconciliation efforts, Companion Relationship with Texas.)
- E. Invest in structural/organizational changes:
 1. Request that Diocesan Council address the following:
 - a) Delegates to Diocesan Convention (proportional or equal representation?)
 - b) Eligibility of canonically resident clergy to vote at Convention.

- c) Scope and functions of regions, if any?
- d) Consequences of non-participation in Diocesan Stewardship Share
- e) Ways to encourage larger congregations to partner with smaller congregations (establish collaborative relationships with?)

These recommendations are intended as an investment in our identity and mission as a diocese over the next several years and to help prepare us for the election of a Bishop Diocesan. They create the means of support that will lead the person we call to know that he or she will join the circle of leadership in a diocese actively engaged in a life of mutual ministries exercised by all its people. The practices of ***The Way of Love*** have informed the work of the New Season of Ministry Task Force and our recommendations. We believe that ***The Way of Love*** is embedded in this report and its recommendations, and we encourage the diocese to live into this Way of Love as we enter the next season of mission and ministry as disciples of Jesus Christ in the Episcopal Diocese of North Dakota. As Bishop Curry reminds us, "His way has the power to change each of our lives and to change this world."



Appendix- dMST Narratives

History

The Diocesan Discernment Task Force Report (DDTF) called for the engagement of a Bishop Provisional who would oversee the hiring of a full-time Diocesan Minister and a full-time Diocesan Administrator. At the same time, a Roanridge grant application was in the works to provide sacramental and congregational development support for five congregations in the Northwest region of the diocese. When Bishop Ely was called and elected to serve as Bishop Provisional, these became immediate priorities, along with all the other goals, hopes, and aspirations of the DDTF. As you can read below, we were able to fill each of these positions with competent and effective leadership, which has served us well as the Diocesan Ministry Support Team (dMST), the name chosen by Bishop Ely to help focus understanding on the nature of the team as diocesan-wide and supportive of the goals and directions set forth in the DDTF. The New Season of Ministry Task Force invited members of the dMST to offer some insights into their ministries. What follows is not a comprehensive report but a snapshot of the focus of each member's ministry.

Bishop Provisional – Tom Ely

My agreement is to serve as Bishop Provisional for three years (starting in 2021) and to “Coach” the Diocese of North Dakota and its leadership in realizing the goals set forth in the Diocesan Discernment Task Force Report (DDTF) approved by Diocesan Convention. This is a half-time position, meant to average 90 hours per month. The reality is that I exceed that time commitment most months, mostly due to the travel required. This position started during Covidtide, and it wasn't until May of 2021 that I was able to travel to North Dakota. Until then and continuing today, much of this ministry is conducted via Zoom, Email, and Phone, with the help and support of members of the Diocesan Ministry Support Team and so many great and committed local leaders in North Dakota.

1. **Travel:** The reality of being a Bishop Provisional who lives 1,500 miles from North Dakota is that travel consumes a great deal of time, including planning, booking flights, housing, rental cars and schedule. Travel each way consumes the better part of a full day, including nights spent at Hartford Airport in advance of early morning flights. Travel is always via Delta through Minneapolis and then to one of the North Dakota airports, depending on congregational visits and other meetings/appointments/commitments.
2. **Visits with congregations:** This is among the most rewarding and important parts of this ministry. I try to visit every congregation at least once every 18 months. Some, I have managed to visit every year. The only congregations where I have not been able to make a formal visitation are White Shield and Dunseith. I hope to do so before this year is over. These visits include leading worship, preaching, Baptism, Confirmation, meeting with leaders, congregational conversations, meals, and other support as needed. Each visit involves over a full day of time and more, including sermon preparation.

3. **Diocesan Ministry Support Team:** Apart from the part-time ministry of Canon Hal Weidman, there was no diocesan staff in place when I began this ministry. Fortunately, Charlotte Peterson was handling all the financial work of the diocese as a volunteer, a ministry she continued until resigning in April 2023. Three full-time positions were to be filled: Diocesan Minister, Diocesan Administrator (both identified in the DDTF as priorities), and the Northwest Ministry Coordinator (a post created through a Roanridge Grant to try and address the sacramental support needs and congregational development opportunities in the geographically large Northwest portion of the diocese. This position was offered to Kim Becker on a two-year contract). In each case, a discernment committee participated in the calling of individuals to serve in these ministries. Ultimately, Steve Godfrey (July 2021), Jessica Thielke (March 2022, after a short tenure by Kelly Nowak), and Kim (Becker) Fox (August 2021) were called to serve. In preparation for the 2024 Diocesan Budget and based on several realities related to the Northwest Ministry project, I determined that this position would not be funded beyond 2023. Some good things were accomplished, however the model as envisioned in the Roanridge Grant is not sustainable. It was a good “try on” and I am grateful for the pastoral and sacramental support it provided. Other provisions for supporting sacramental and pastoral ministry in this region are under consideration.
4. **Leadership Support and Development:** In my role as Coach, I have tried to strengthen the various leadership bodies, including Diocesan Convention, Diocesan Council, and all committees, commissions, and working groups. This involved increased meeting times, and focused attention to the priorities and recommendations established in the DDTF Report. With the support of the other members of the dMST, and other committed leaders, we have seen growth and commitment in these areas of our common life. In addition, we have added opportunities for clergy and lay leaders to gather for mutual support, and I have made it a priority to be available for leaders in each ministry area for support and consultation. Again, members of the dMST have been key participants in strengthening these ministry areas, including communications, reconciliation, congregational development, finance, personnel policies, safer church, youth ministry, creation care, the Commission on Ministry (School for Ministry), NDCIM, EFMHE, NDEF, and Convention Planning. Most recently, during the past year, much of my attention and time has been directed toward the work of the New Season of Ministry Task Force (NSMTF), as they seek to help the Diocese of North Dakota discern its future shape and structure for continued mission and ministry. John Baird and Carmine Goodhouse, co-chairs of the Task Force, asked me to facilitate the work of this Task Force, rather than an outside consultant, and so this has become a key priority and focused use of my time.
5. **The Diocese and Wider Church:** A Bishop Provisional has the same jurisdiction as a Bishop Diocesan, without the level of tenure afforded an elected Bishop Diocesan. As such, there are many administrative, pastoral, sacramental, and wider-church oversight responsibilities that are part of this ministry. These include the ordination process, licensing of clergy and various lay ministries, pastoral support to clergy and their families, the Title IV discipline process, consents to episcopal elections and the resignation of bishops, presiding at Diocesan Council and Convention, various appointments to committees and commissions, various fiduciary responsibilities,

including the budget and support for various grant applications (UTO, Roanridge, Constable, Creation Care, etc.), supervision of certain staff, participation in the House of Bishops, the General Convention, the Synod and House of Bishops in Province VI, and other wider-church affiliations related to this ministry in North Dakota, such as the Living Waters Bishop's Collaborative. Much of this area of ministry is not highly visible to others throughout the diocese but involve essential elements in the ministry of oversight expected of a Bishop Provisional and Bishop Diocesan. As such, there is a significant time commitment here.

Diocesan Minister - The Rev. Steve Godfrey

The key roles envisioned for the Diocesan Minister in the Diocesan Discernment Task Force report included administrative support to congregations and leaders, communication and events that strengthen congregational leadership, reviving the School for Ministry, working with congregations on Sundays, being part of a team and circle of leadership with the bishop and other leaders, and supporting diocesan reconciliation efforts. This report provides a snapshot of the work of the diocesan minister as seen in the first half of 2023.

Direct work with congregations, including preparing for, preaching, presiding, and meeting with members of the congregations on Sundays, holidays, and for funerals has been a major part of my work, along with providing pastoral and administrative support for local lay leaders and deacons, addressing illnesses and other struggles, encouraging participation in the Diocesan Stewardship Share, maintaining property, and completing parochial reports. This work has been pretty much constant at St. Thomas in Fort Totten, on a nearly monthly basis at St. John's in Dickinson and Advent in Devils Lake, and less frequently at St. Peter's in Walhalla and St. John the Divine in Moorhead. It also included work at All Saints in Minot, St. Peter's in Williston, and St. Michael and All Angels in Cartwright, when the Northwest coordinator was away. At St. George's in Bismarck, I presided and preached on Ash Wednesday and at a retirement community service, and have provided transition consulting with the wardens, interim pastor, vestry, and search committee. I also consulted with the vestry at Grace Church in Jamestown about their hopes and dreams, and by phone with the priest in charge and senior warden at St. Sylvan's in Dunseith, to review and establish goals and accountability.

Another significant piece of work has been **coordinating sacramental and preaching ministry** by other priests who have supplied in Walhalla, Devils Lake, Fort Totten, Dickinson, and Moorhead. There is budgeting and accounting work to make sure supply priests get paid and reimbursed for travel.

Much of my time involves Zoom and in-person meetings, phone calls, emails, and text messages with priests, deacons, and lay leaders. These **conversations** are for discernment, liturgy planning, pastoral and administrative support, advice, and even strategic thinking about the future of the diocese, in the case of an especially interesting meeting with a lay leader who hopes the diocese will do more than just survive!

I have also continued to work in support of the **Congregational Development Committee**, to try to build on the work begun last year with Partnership for Renewal and support leadership for

congregational development through phone calls and meetings with our committee members and consultants and participating in offerings of The Episcopal Church's Office of Church Planting and Redevelopment.

The Commission on Ministry affirmed a plan for the School for Ministry last year and I have been supporting the execution of that plan, which has included several Zoom classes this year. The next phase was going to be a weekend class in Valley City in April, followed by further Zoom sessions, but the course was under-enrolled and cancelled, after we had already done some planning. I have supported the Commission on Ministry (COM) to discern a more realistic future for the School for Ministry, focused on providing one-day and/or online formation for lay leaders while encouraging ordained leaders to make use of the increasingly wide variety of online offerings by seminaries and various dioceses. We are discussing a possible preaching class for the fall. I have also supported the COM in continuing to develop new editions of the manual, timelines, and forms involved in the ordination process, and to address some specific situations, and I have supported seminarians – helping a student at the Seminary of the Southwest balance the various challenges of being away at seminary and mentoring a student in the new Mentor Assessed Master of Divinity Program of Bexley Seabury Seminary, while also coordinating the diocese's involvement in that program in which we have two students, both from Native/Indigenous contexts, for which that program has been especially designed.

Reconciliation has been hard work, given the complexities of that issue in North Dakota and this diocese. With the support of numerous, long conversations in person, on Zoom and over the phone, including a consultation with leaders in the Diocese of Northern Michigan, we held a pretty successful retreat for the Reconciliation Committee at United Tribes Technical College in April. The focus was on sharing stories and building trust. There was considerable follow up after that about next steps, especially how to work on the ongoing reality of racism. I attended the Dismantling Racism course offered on Zoom by the Absalom Jones Center for Racial Healing and the Diocese of Atlanta, as a way to update my certification and research the possibility of partnering for development of a program for our diocese. Others are attending that class too.

I have also worked to support the **diocesan youth ministry** goal by convening a discernment and search committee, leading development of a position description for a part-time youth and young adults ministry developer, advertising the position, scheduling and hosting interviews, checking references, and communicating with a candidate. We received two applications and did not identify a candidate with the gifts and skills we feel we need. So, I developed a proposal for a full-time position that also addresses other diocesan goals, which the task force is invited to consider.

Another major role has been coordinating the work of the **diocesan Ministry Support Team**, assembling agendas, facilitating meetings, and meeting with the other team members in person, on Zoom, and on the phone, for strategic planning, ministry oversight and coordination, supervision of team members, administrative support, and encouragement.

I continue to do some **administrative work** alongside our capable diocesan administrator. I have participated in meetings to figure out the finance transition and have worked on editing the budget to address programmatic and staffing gaps and work toward a plan for 2024 by helping

to create specific recommendations to the New Season of Ministry Task Force and Finance Committee and attend Finance Committee meetings. I have also helped to finalize the Safe Church policies and drafted a proposal for a Bakken Ministry Fund policy for Diocesan Council.

The diocesan administrator does most of the heavy lifting for **communications and events**, but I have continued to help in assembling and reviewing publications to try to address our various ministries and responding to questions and concerns. I have continued to organize monthly Zoom meetings for clergy and wardens and hosted a Zoom meeting for wardens and treasurers. I was the on the ground point person for the clergy conference, Council, Reconciliation Committee, and other meetings and have continued to participate in planning for Diocesan Convention, including recruiting a keynote speaker and musician. For Council, I have coordinated goals and review processes and assisted the bishop and Council in the running of meetings, online and in person.

In support of the **New Season of Ministry Task Force** work, I have participated in meetings with colleagues in Minnesota, Montana, and Texas, and led participation in the Diocese of Northern Michigan Visitors Weekend. I have participated in some task force meetings, including a meeting about the canons with a subcommittee.

In the **wider church**, I participate in leadership of the Living Waters Cooperative, an organization that promotes conversation and support related to ministry development. I represent the diocese on the Province VI Council, attending monthly Zoom meetings, and have also attended Zoom conversations about small church challenges in the province. I meet with ELCA colleagues and watched part of (Indigenous Ministries) Winter Talk on Zoom. I gave an interview to a reporter about the White Shield environmental reparations prayer path project for an article published by Episcopal News Service. I also facilitated some advocacy related to legislative action.

Finally, I was able to make a **spiritual retreat** at the Society of St. John the Evangelist monastery, an annual practice that had been suspended since 2019, and I meet roughly once a month with a spiritual director at Annunciation Monastery in Bismarck. These are essential practices to support a very demanding ministry.

NW Regional Coordinator – the Rev. Kim Fox

Background

I was appointed by Bishop Tom Ely as NW Regional Coordinator for a two-year term. It was decided that Minot was the most centrally-located town to serve as home base. The position was partially funded by a Roanridge grant that envisioned a collective of five congregations in the Northwest (St. Peter's, Willison, St. Michael and All Angels, Cartwright, All Saints, Minot, St. Sylvan's, Dunseith, and St. Paul's, White Shield). Two of the congregations are Native American and the other three are Anglo. In addition to myself, the Rev. Mary Johnson initially was helping provide support in the Northwest. The Rev. Steve Godfrey has filled in when I have been away for vacation and spiritual retreats. A second successful Roanridge has helped fund the position. Each congregation was asked to contribute to the Northwest initiative and during my first year, I

wrote NDEF grants for the two Native congregations for their portion; the second year, it was decided to encourage more initiative from the respective congregations, should they wish to pursue additional NDEF funding. Even though the Northwest has not come together in ways we envisioned, I would not characterize this attempt as a failure. It was, as Bishop Tom is fond of saying, something to “try on.”

Overview of responsibilities

From my home base in Minot, I have provided **sacramental support** (Eucharist services) twice/month to each of three Anglo churches in Northwest (Minot, Cartwright, Williston). In addition to Sunday services, I provided Christmas, Holy Week, and Easter services, as well as baptisms and funerals. I was available as a liturgical resource both for White Shield and Dunseith, but was not able to offer regular services there as they have their own priests, albeit part-time and retired.

As priest and former hospice and hospital chaplain, I have been honored to provide **pastoral care** through hospital and home visits, phone calls, email, and even text. I have engaged in confidential pastoral communications not only with parishioners, but also with Minot Air Force Base members, especially in coordination with Fr. Mark Bradshaw, the last chaplain on Base, who was also an Episcopal priest and offered occasional services at All Saints, Minot. As part of continuing education, I completed my 4th unit of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) in order to hone my skills as a pastoral caregiver; I plan to seek board certification as a chaplain.

I also have exercised **administrative** duties through keeping parish registers and baptismal records up to date and assisting with parochial reports. I attend vestry and annual meetings called by senior wardens. I create and maintain a calendar for the Northwest, doing my best to ensure coverage when I am away.

Training as trainer with Partnership for Renewal, I have been better able to support each congregation in identifying spiritual gifts and developing vision and plans to engage with respective communities in their **congregational development**.

Grant-writing I wrote a United Thank Offering grant in creation care, specifically environmental reparations, for St. Paul’s White Shield, in recognition of ancestral lands flooded by Garrison dam. This is a threefold project of traditional garden, prayer path commemorating drowned towns, and elder-led classes. Wrote a second successful Roanridge to support rural ministry, as well as NDEF grants that funded technology support and website development at White Shield and training of Chaplain Mark Bradshaw’s service dog. I now assist congregations in fulfilling, maintaining, and reporting on grants.

I have been intentional about **community involvement**, especially in White Shield and Minot.

Communications with diocesan support team members, congregational leaders, and members. I also write articles for *The Sheaf* and submit news to *The Prairie*.

My **diocesan involvement** includes serving on the dMST, Creation Care Committee, Reconciliation Committee, Convention Planning Committee, and Congregational Development Committee. I attend the monthly Leadership Call and have presented at two School for Ministry events, in person and online, on the topic of ministry, especially pastoral care. I am secretary for NDCIM.

In addition to being a writer for Forward Day by Day, my **churchwide involvement** includes presenting on the Northwest initiative at TEC Forma (Network for Christian Formation) conference. I was also the annual speaker for Church Periodical Club. I participate in Indigenous Office Hour (weekly calls for Native clergy and those serving or affiliated with Native churches from around the country). I elected as a clergy deputy to the next General Convention.

Challenges

- racism (resulting in what I perceive as disparity of treatment and financial allocation between Native and Anglo congregations)
- historical/intergenerational trauma
- low attendance
- navigating boundaries with former clergy
- financial duress exacerbated by pandemic
- lack of open church building in White Shield, although funds are available and work on renovation is commencing
- lack of receptivity from priest at St. Sylvan's, hampering my ability to build connection and serve effectively as resource, as with all other NW congregations
- heavy travel across long distances
- each congregation has different stances on social justice issues, so preaching and providing pastoral care to diverse congregations was often a challenge and it has taken time to build trust in the various communities
- professional isolation
- lack of collective "buy in" (financial and otherwise) to the Northwest experiment
- constraints of PT bishop on ability to make in-person visits
- only two-year appointment, so not enough time to make much difference within the system
- learning circular model of leadership

Opportunities

- working with Partnership for Renewal
- All Saints partnering with Lutheran Campus Ministry for LGBTQ prayer service and participating in city Pride events
- potential for more partnering with ELCA
- continue to collaborate with the pastoral care unit on Base
- potential future NDEF grants to support ministry

- potential for St. Paul's, White Shield's UTO grant projects to become a pilgrimage site even beyond this Diocese
- should the building sell in Williston, more revenue will be available for new ministry
- revisioning of Bakken fund could open up new avenues for ministry
- expand youth ministry, especially given Cartwright youth participation in EYE
- potential for providing care to Episcopal patients at new hospital in Minot and outreach to healthcare workers
- monthly leadership call is an opportunity for strengthening collegiality and sharing resources, as is the School for Ministry
- increased Native presence on Committees and at Convention; celebrate that two Native lay people are now enrolled in seminary
- Continued intentional conversation and listening around the fraught topic of race and confronting trauma of Native peoples is an opportunity for confession and, at some point, a step closer towards reconciliation. Our land acknowledgment is a start in naming the rightful inhabitants of this place and the geo-spiritual significance of the land on which we serve
- Given the current political climate, the Episcopal Branch of the Jesus Movement in North Dakota also has the opportunity of being that "red door" of welcome to those who have been traumatized by the Church as institution.
- circular ministry, claiming our baptismal call as co-creators with our Creator

Diocesan Administrator – Jessica Thielke

Communications

In a given month, outside of answering regular emails and the Diocesan phone as it rings, I also create, in tandem with our Diocesan Minister and our Bishop, two editions of the *Prairie* and semi-monthly editions of *The Sheaf*. Both take time and effort to gather stories and then provide layout drafts and editing along the way.

As part of the Diocesan Ministry Support Team (dMST), I also help keep up with our Facebook page, monitoring comments and posts, and posting material as appropriate. In regard to technological communication, I also maintain the website. I work with our web developer as needed, as well as everyone who contributes to the website. I design pages as needed, and update information.

In tandem with the dMST, I update the calendar as needed, making sure meetings and events are up-to-date and published in appropriate places. I also communicate with the dMST for meeting locations, time, and send out Zoom links as needed.

One other place I spend some time is in our database REALM. It is an ongoing project to figure out the best way to use this database throughout the diocese. But I regularly send emails from REALM and post updates to groups.

Another key place for REALM and communications is for Diocesan Council. Each month, prior to the council meeting, I gather reports from key leaders, groups, and committees. Then I compile those reports, upload them to REALM, and distribute them to Diocesan Council and Standing Committee members. I typically send three or four emails worth of documents, compiling anywhere from ten to twenty-five reports each month.

Events

As events and meetings arise throughout the diocese, I am often involved with planning lodging, food, and meeting space. I work with a variety of hotels, to try to get the best deal and make lodging seamless for the participants attending whatever event is being held. Some of these events include Diocesan Council, School for Ministry, Task Force meetings, retreats, and Convention (see below).

As things change with events, I also amend reservations, keep in contact with the hotels, and adapt as needed, especially during the winter months. Depending on the type of meeting, I also help get supplies to where they need to go.

Finally, post-meeting/event I also help groups with their notes if things need to be transcribed or emailed out. I am available to help as needed, to whichever groups/committees need extra assistance with administrative details.

Financial Administration

This part of the job is in flux with the resignation of our previous treasurer. Right now, this is where I am spending a good majority of my hours each week, working on figuring out what we are missing and keeping track of all the moving pieces. In a regular week I complete weekly deposits, pay the bills as they arrive, and work with our bookkeeper on Wednesdays and Fridays.

At the current time I also attend Finance Committee meetings as they arise. I meet with both our bookkeeper and treasurer as we figure out the state of the finances for the Diocese during this transitional time period. Our previous treasurer acted as CFO for the diocese, during this transition we are currently divvying out those duties to make sure everything is covered. For the time being a lot of those pieces flow through my desk, so as not to get lost throughout this time.

Another large piece of the financial aspect of this job is grant tracking and reporting. Making sure funds have been released and that we, as a diocese, are accounting for where the money is being spent. It also requires turning in documentation and updating things as necessary as the year progresses.

Meetings

Throughout the weeks, months, and years there are various meetings I attend. Some of these include finance committee, online council meetings, bi-weekly dMST meetings (in person and on zoom), safe church meetings, convention planning meetings, and the WoDakota meetings. All of these vary in their tasks as to what needs to be accomplished pre- and post-meeting.

There are also trainings that I attend as offering through Praesidium, CPG, ACS, and other companies that help make the Diocesan Administrator job run more smoothly and gathering information as needed.

Diocesan Convention

Diocesan Convention is held every October. Throughout the year I attend Diocesan Convention Planning meetings to help the diocese to be prepared for Convention. I, along with our Diocesan Minister, compile delegate lists with information from each of our churches. There is also registration, pre-convention mailings, nomination forms, website, resolutions, table requests, and a myriad of other things that go on behind the scenes to make Convention successful each year. I also communicate with the hotel on a regular basis leading up to, and at the, Convention.

Continuing Education

Once a year I participate in continuing education, whether that is the B+E+S+T Conference in May or the EBAC conference in September. Both are beneficial, however, anytime someone is away from their regularly scheduled job, more work goes into everything.

The B+E+S+T Conference is for all Bishop's Executives, and those who do similar jobs. We gather in different provinces, networking and spending time together. This way, when things arise throughout the diocese, we have people to call on to help us figure out what needs to be done. EBAC is hosted by Church Pension Group. This conference goes through changes that are coming from Church Pension in relation to insurance, both medical and building, as well as anything related to pension and benefits.