

Mission, Structure and Budget Task Force Report to the 236th Convention of the Diocese of New Jersey

The Mission, Structure and Budget Task Force was formed in response to the following resolution passed at the Special Convention of the Diocese held on October 7, 2017:

Be it resolved. That this Special Convention authorizes and requests the Bishop to create a task force to make recommendations to the 236th Annual Convention of the Diocese in 2020 to align our diocesan structures and budget to the Anglican Marks of Mission and to our understanding of ourselves as a missionary diocese.

At the Leadership Retreat of June 2, 2018 it became clear that the Holy Spirit was moving through the diocese in a way that would clarify our work - and the work of our whole diocese from individual laypersons to the bishop. The work was centered in and on discipleship expressed as the following mission:

The Mission of every member of the Diocese of New Jersey is to form people and be formed as people who are disciples of Jesus Christ, participating in God's mission of reconciliation in the world.

Disciples of Jesus Christ are known when the Baptismal Covenant and Anglican Five Marks of Mission are being lived out in observable and obvious ways.

The Five Marks also become an evaluative tool to support the focus of the task force mission - developing a framework to align our diocesan structures and budget to enable congregations along with all of the other organizations in our diocese to become schools of discipleship. Teaching the Five Marks of Mission should initially focus on Mark 1 (Proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom.) and Mark 2 (Teach, nurture and baptize new members.) which would facilitate the creation of schools of discipleship. Establishing and equipping with Marks 1 and 2 would then enable congregational structures to participate in other Marks also motivated by their gifts and the Holy Spirit (responding to human need, transforming unjust structures and safeguarding the integrity of creation).

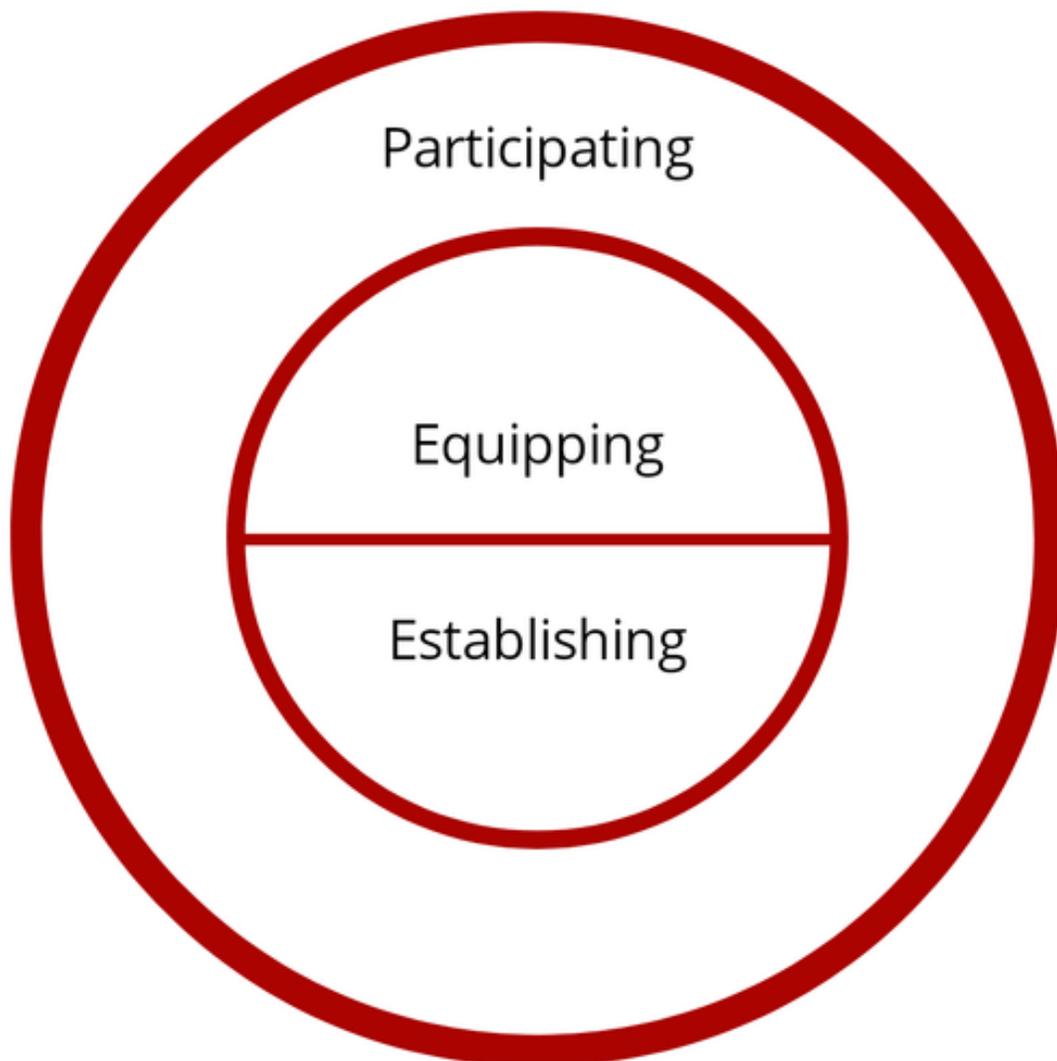
We developed the following concentric circle organizational structure shown below to enable the development of our congregations as schools of discipleship:

- The **establishing** segment of the inner circle includes entities such as diocesan staff which provide direction for disciple making to be implemented first through equipping.
- The **equipping** segment of the inner circle includes organizations such as Way of St Paul, committees, councils or commissions to assist congregations in various aspects of becoming schools of discipleship.
- **Participating** - the annular space between the inner and outer circles encompasses congregations and other diocesan organizations, the recipients of establishing and equipping to become schools of discipleship. Eventually some congregations may participate in equipping other congregations to become schools of discipleship.
- The solid circular lines and the dividing line in the inner circle should be thought of as flexible, dashed lines to characterize, in time, an expanding participating function (growth in

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congregations becoming schools of discipleship), and a reduced need for establishing and equipping. Also the equipping function would expand and the establishing function contract as shown by the lowering of the dividing line.

- The three elements of establishing, equipping and participating interface with each other. The task force recognized situations such as affiliations between congregations, transitions, capacity building and struggles within congregations where diocesan staff would continue to equip congregations directly. Coaches would follow up from diocesan staff later in the process.



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We have developed a series of questions, incorporating Marks of Mission 1 & 2, to assist congregations to evaluate their progress in becoming schools of discipleship as follows:

- How are you proclaiming the Good News?
- How are you making disciples?
- How is the congregation serving the community?
- What changes are happening to bring people closer to Christ?
- How can the diocese support you including funding?

As an example, the Rev. Emily Mellott of Trinity Moorestown has been working with her church on deepening their commitment to discipleship and formation. Doing “Dwelling in the Word” and “Discipleship for Episcopalians” with the vestry - an intentional time of prayer and study - has made the vestry a strong, more spiritually oriented body. Vestry people are excited for where the church is going, they are picking up more leadership roles, they are engaging with Dwelling in the Word and several vestry members have asked to serve another term on the vestry. Doing Renewal Works with Trinity helped identify (and verify) the need/desire for more discipleship and formation work. This produced three different Bible studies, several groups doing Discipleship for Episcopalians and people showing up with a desire to lead groups themselves and an increase in people taking leadership roles in the parish. Although these initiatives did not start out as an intentional decision to make Trinity into a school of discipleship, that is exactly what has happened in the last three years.

The Finance and Budget Committee included the following text in their letter to anyone requesting funding from the 2020 Diocesan Budget: "The Finance and Budget Committee continues to be guided by the ongoing work of the Discerning our Common Call Steering Committee as well as the Mission, Structure & Budget Task Force. In addition all requests will also be considered through the lens of fulfilling our unifying purpose as articulated by Bishop Stokes during our 235th annual Convention in March 2019. That your responses fulfill our unifying purpose through each of the Five Marks of Mission are equally important. In addition please address how your activities contribute to the ‘Schools of Discipleship’ roll-out that is taking place across the Diocese."

The task force first considered a recommendation that the diocesan budget be transitioned into a more local and grant-centric funding scheme. The idea was that modest grants would be used to provide funding to congregations for Marks 1 and 2 projects in the outer participation ring of our concentric ring structure. These grants would provide seed money to help congregations develop initiatives to facilitate progress towards the formation of schools of discipleship. Proposals would be submitted by one or more congregations as a basis for funding requests. The primary distributor for these grants would be the convocations. For example, a grant for youth ministry might be requested from an individual congregation with another congregation to pursue ministry in an urban setting.

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However, after speaking with various stakeholders, it became clear that more work would need to go into redesigning the diocesan funding scheme and that convocations would likely need more administrative support from the diocese should block grants become the norm. Specific issues included concerns over racial, class, and gender equity among congregations receiving grants, concerns over increases in administrative and clerical work, concerns over potential disputes and legal issues arising from this funding scheme, as well as a general sense that this method for decentralization was not going to be easily or quickly implemented, and that it required a significant cultural and psychological reordering within the diocese, among convocations, and among parishes and clergy. This does not necessarily alter our basic recommendation that we are being called to decentralization in some way similar to this. It simply means that more time is needed to further develop the concept with all stakeholders and see where that process leads us.

Another potential conduit for implementation is the Board of Consultation. The Board of Consultation will be continually meeting with congregations which are unable to meet their Marks of Mission Minimum Giving request in order to negotiate and grant reductions in their respective minimum giving requirements, while offering them time, resources and ongoing support to help address their underlying spiritual, formational and demographic challenges. The MSB task force recommends that the Board of Consultation invite these congregations to become schools of discipleship as part of their respective plans to grow their Marks of Mission Giving.

In sum, the Task Force sees that it has completed its work in helping to identify and address the restructuring of key dynamics and components of diocesan structure and budget to better align with our evolving understanding of our common call to form disciples of Jesus Christ to participate in God's mission of reconciliation in the world. The mission of creating schools for discipleship is in place. We have recommended a major shift in our structure and understanding of diocesan community into one that more clearly incorporates and expresses our interdependence and connectedness. And we have made initial recommendations as to how diocesan budgetary concerns – along with the other functions of the diocese – might be diffused to enable agility, flexibility and increased accountability, to emphasize and lift up our interconnectedness and to facilitate the building of stronger, healthier relationships all around.

But the work of adapting and restructuring is iterative, and this is only a beginning. These recommendations need to be tested in practice, the results reflected upon and the recommendations refined. The Task Force therefore recommends that a new task force be created to further the work so well begun and report back to the 237th Annual Convention of the Diocese of New Jersey.

Be it resolved, That the 236th Annual Convention of the Diocese of New Jersey authorize and request the Bishop to create a new task force to work together with the Discerning Our Common Call Committee to add form and framework to the shape of its recommendations around structure and budget, and, more specifically, to use the mission of the diocese as the starting point and stress the need for increased accountability, increased flexibility and the building of deeper relationships between and among diocesan congregations, staff, administrative bodies, and missional committees through increased engagement and participation in diocesan community life and mutual support.