

Mission Strategy Committee Update to the 234th (2019) Annual Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts

In 2016, our Diocese affirmed a new mission strategy to guide us forward. Together, we promised to “embrace brave change by **reimagining our congregations** to better respond to the movement of the Holy Spirit in our time and place; **building our relationships** to unite as one body in Christ; and **engaging our world** to reconcile ourselves and all people to one another, and all Creation to God. Through this call, we committed to nine goals and twenty-two action items to implement our strategy together. (We strongly commend that you reread our strategy found at: www.diomass.org/our-mission)

And we’ve made tremendous progress over the last three years. The staffing at the Office of the Bishop has been reorganized and new positions created to align with the goals of our strategy. Diocesan Council has undertaken a thorough evaluation of all mission initiatives and programs funded through our diocesan budget. In 2021 our budget itself will reflect connections to our Mission Strategy goals.

Congregations have gathered multiple times through an Indaba Pilot program in order to spend time learning from one another and building deep connections over meals and through hospitality. The Creation Care Justice Network continues to draw attention to our call to care for the environment in new and fresh ways. An Evangelism Network has been formed in order to help us share the stories of Jesus and our faith with others. Ecumenical and interfaith connections continue to grow in our parishes. Our new Canon for Immigration and Multicultural Ministries has begun his important work supporting and building up those communities. A 20s & 30s Task Force has explored how to better integrate members of that cohort into the life of our Church. And so much more.

We do this work not to grow our Average Sunday Attendance, but in order to share the good news of Jesus.

The words we affirmed in our Mission Strategy state it best: “With God’s help, we can support our congregations as they reimagine the shape of discipleship in 21st century Massachusetts. We believe in the power of Christian community to transform our lives through God’s grace, a promise that sustains us even as we adapt to meet the needs of a changing world.”

Plans for 2020

In the coming year we plan to:

- Host a Small Church Summit — Goal 3.b —for those congregations who have part-time positions for their clergy. Lay leaders and clergy will be invited to attend for conversation, learnings, and support.
- Offer Regional Wardens’ Days and Administrators’ Days— Goal 3.c — to strengthen our lay leaders and help them to learn from and connect to one another.

- Encourage the use of Mission Match — Goal 5.b — so congregations doing similar ministries can connect with, and learn from, one another.
- Prepare for larger and committed conversations about racism and other forms of oppression — Goal 7.b — to take us further into work of justice and reconciliation.
- Explore ways to provide “micro-grants” for congregations to “embrace brave change” and try new things within their congregations. (Multiple Goals)

All of these things will help us make progress in our mission and our desire to share in God’s redeeming work in our world. We close with our Prayer for our Diocese and Our Mission Strategy:

Lord Jesus Christ, we come before you as a people of God,
seeking to join your transforming work in the world.
Open our eyes to see the movement of your Spirit.
Open our minds to imagine new possibilities.
Open our ears to hear the voices of all your children.
Open our mouths to speak with honesty and love.
Open our hands to share all that we have.
Open our hearts to receive all that we need.
Thank you, Lord, for calling us
as your disciples and friends.
Give us courage to follow where you lead. Amen.

Submitted by Claudette Hunt and the Rev. Phil LaBelle, Co-Chairs