

# Creating a new mission strategy for 2016

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It's time to create a new mission strategy for the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts. A mission strategy is a plan for our future. It identifies our priorities, so we know how to best use our financial, staff and other resources. Our mission strategy is a response to the particular gifts of our diocese and the changing needs of our communities in eastern Massachusetts. It identifies the ways that we hope to answer Jesus' call to be disciples together.

## Why now?

Our canons say that it is time: they instruct our bishop and Diocesan Council to update our mission strategy every three years. Our last mission strategy was approved in November 2012. The next one would have been due in November 2015. At last year's Diocesan Convention, we welcomed our new diocesan bishop and decided to wait a year to review our mission priorities. So at this Convention in 2015, we are just beginning the process to create a new mission strategy for 2016-2019. This process gives us all an opportunity to partner with our bishops, the Rt. Rev. Alan M. Gates and the Rt. Rev. Gayle E. Harris, to help chart the next course for our diocese.

## Who will be involved?

Everyone! A good mission strategy will be both a true reflection of who we are now and a bold vision of who we can become with God's help. To discern our mission, we need every member of our diocese to take part: young and old, cradle and convert, big cities and small towns, traditional parishes and new ministries, across races and ethnicities, genders and orientations, incomes and abilities, representing the full diversity of our church.

## How will we develop our mission strategy? With God's help!

### Phase I: Design a process (May-November 2015)

Bishop Gates and Diocesan Council appointed a seven-person team to create a plan for the listening process. The goal of this design team is to ensure that every member of our diocese will have an opportunity to offer ideas about what's working, what we could change, what needs we see in our communities and what new dreams we have for our diocese.

The design team has created *Shared Mission*, a brief profile of our diocese's history, current ministries and wider context as a starting point for conversations. It's available online at [www.diomass.org/new-mission-strategy](http://www.diomass.org/new-mission-strategy).

## **Phase II: Listen to everyone (December 2015 – April 2016)**

A listening team appointed by Bishop Gates and Diocesan Council will invite your insights through surveys, large forums and smaller targeted meetings in December, January and February. As a diocese, we will engage in conversations about our diverse forms of worship, our formation of children, youth and adults in the faith and our mission to connect with and serve our neighbors and our wider communities. We will also consider the sustainability of our finances, our buildings and our staff and volunteer resources.

The listening team will work with professionals with expertise in social science research to collect and analyze the information from the surveys and conversations. We want to ensure that everyone's voice is heard clearly and given careful consideration.

In April, once the data has been compiled, the team will post a report online so that everyone can see what ideas and concerns have emerged. This will be an opportunity to review and comment on our progress so far, in case there is something important that we have missed.

## **Identify priorities (May 2016 – November 2016)**

A strategy team appointed by Bishop Gates and Diocesan Council will look at all the insights from the listening process alongside information about the challenges and opportunities in our diocese, the Episcopal Church and the wider community. They will prayerfully consider our many voices and perspectives and help us identify a few key areas to focus on in the next three years.

Based on these priorities, the team will recommend next steps to the bishops, the Diocesan Council and the representatives of the people of our diocese at our Diocesan Convention in November 2016. Then we can all start working together to make our shared vision a reality.

## **What can I do?**

We need your voice in the listening process. Make a plan to attend one of the open forums or to complete a survey. Encourage other members of your congregation or ministry to take part with you. Invite your community to have a conversation about the future of our diocese, perhaps as part of an adult formation program or a parish meeting. Pray that together we will be open to the movement of the Holy Spirit.

### **Your Listening Process Design Team**

The Rev. Libby Berman, Canon for Congregations

Mr. Billy Boyce, Grace Church in New Bedford

Dr. Jim Daniell, All Saints Parish in Brookline

The Rev. Thea Keith Lucas, Episcopal Chaplain at MIT

The Rev. Derrick Muwina, All Saints' Church in West Newbury

The Rev. Dr. Meghan Sweeney, All Saints' Church in Attleboro

Mr. John Woodard, St. Paul's Church in Dedham

**Questions? Concerns? E-mail us at [diomasslistening@gmail.com](mailto:diomasslistening@gmail.com).  
For information and updates visit [www.diomass.org/new-mission-strategy](http://www.diomass.org/new-mission-strategy).**