

Sept 2019

The Diocesan Council holds a Saturday retreat in early September. At that time, we review the budget for the upcoming fiscal year and vote to present it to the Diocesan Convention in November. This year, the Budget Committee held budget conversations to engage with people across the diocese about the budget. Among other things, this allowed the committee to hear what people wanted to know and understand. You will see this reflected in the budget booklet for this fall's convention in the narratives, the graphics, and the rearrangement of the display of some line items. Each year I am on Council, I learn more about the collaborative work that goes into the creation of the budget booklet we receive for Convention. It is truly impressive.

Martha Gardner, our Missioner for Networking & Formation, attended the retreat. It was my first opportunity to meet her. People kept mentioning 'Martha's Newsletter' and raving about how wonderful it is. This turns out to be the Networking and Formation Newsletter. It is sent quarterly, and the September one was jammed packed with interesting information. If you don't receive this communication already and would like to sign up to receive this newsletter, please contact Martha at mgardner@diomass.org.

Martha presented information on the Resource Day coming up on September 28. Its theme is 'The Way of Love: Formation, Evangelism & Discipleship'. The Way of Love offers a way, according to the Presiding Bishop, to show how we can together grow more deeply with Jesus Christ at the center of our lives, so we can bear witness to his way of love in and for the world. We will continue the focus on Way of Love, begun by the Presiding Bishop's visit in April, and continuing with Clergy Day, Resource Day and Diocesan Convention. The registration deadline is Sept. 25.



RESOURCE DAY

*for Formation,
Evangelism and Discipleship*

Saturday, Sept. 28, 9:30 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Cathedral Church of St. Paul, 138 Tremont St., Boston

- Learn how these Way of Love practices can be used, individually and in your congregation, for formation, evangelism and discipleship, and receive tools to do so
- Enjoy opportunities for peer-to-peer conversation, sharing and networking
- Join the ministries of our diocese and congregations in an opportunity to engage and build relationships

Gather a group and get ready for an inspiring day of learning and growing together as a diocesan community!

Find details and register by Sept. 25 at:
www.diomass.org/resource-day-2019

Martha also disseminated the new policies on Safe Church for the Diocese. We need to update our policies to be in line with the revised policies from General Convention. These new policies and the new requirements for clerical and lay training and reporting on trainings will be discussed at Clergy Day. New online training modules are being developed to be in line with the new requirements. These will be available by 2021.

Lastly, Martha mentioned dinner with Jerusalem Greer, the Presiding Bishop's staff officer for Evangelism, on Tuesday September 24th. She has sent us a followup email with the details: "Everyone, both lay and clergy, are invited for an exclusive conversation with Jerusalem about what it would look like to use Evangelism as a practice for ourselves and our worshipping communities. We plan on starting our conversation around 5:00 pm and extending it over an early supper. Please feel free to invite others to join us. RSVP to me at mgardner@diomass.org so we can plan accordingly. "

Towards the end of our agenda, we heard a progress report on the implementation of the Diocesan Mission Strategy, I attach that report to this one for you to read at your convenience. When you read this collation of efforts around the diocese, you realize that we really are moving forward living into the overall mission strategy.

Respectfully submitted,

Helen Gordon

Mission Strategy Committee Update — September 7, 2019

Committee Membership Update

We have two co-chairs in the North-West Region. Dean McCreath has been in contact for someone from the Cathedral Chapter to join us; Claudette and I are reaching out to two others approved by Bishop Gates to ask them to join as at-large members and representative of our diocese.

Assessment Formula Review and Mission Strategy

Our shared Mission Strategy should guide our budget, and we are making inroads on that front. However, we have begun the conversation and desire to review the Assessment Formula separately from determining what our Strategy needs may be. We are on track to review and refine the Strategy at the 2021 Diocesan Convention with much time given for review and reflection at the 2020 convention, and we would propose that the future assessment determination be merged with this process and timing. While it may mean the status quo for two more years, it will be beneficial for us to fully integrate the budget with our desires as a Diocese in relation to our Mission, asking first “What is God calling us to do?” and then “How do we fund this call?” rather than “How much can each congregation afford?” and then “How do we make our mission work with these budgetary constraints?”

Updates for Working Groups, and Networks

We’ve received updates from from groups engaging in mission strategy work (see below). Our plan will be to do updates quarterly following a regular meeting with the bishops and senior staff on how we are engaging our mission strategy. The first meeting will be in late October, and an update will be presented to Council in December.

Evangelism Network — Co-Chairs Billy Boyce and the Rev. Debbie Phillips. The Evangelism team has spent time building networks across Province 1. They are developing three regional teams of 4-7 people each. They hope to have a training with a member of the Presiding Bishop’s staff in the near future. Focus on sharing the good news of Christ and not engaging in marketing for the Episcopal Church to drive attendance.

Elder Ministries (aka “Lifespan Ministries”) — Co-Chairs the Rev. Deacon Phil Flaherty and Annette Nicolas. In collaboration with our regional canons and deans, they are planning a “listening tour” of our diocese’ deaneries and congregations to bring awareness to our mission and learn of the opportunities and challenges congregations are experiencing with regard to their older members. Their goal is to initiate discussion, and support congregations in becoming part of the “age-friendly” and “dementia-friendly” movement within their congregations and the communities in which they live. They are urging decision makers of our Diocese to assist this effort by promoting diocesan awareness, identifying other individuals or organizations with similar mission or interest in joining them, and advocating for future budgetary support.

Dismantling Racism — Co-Chair The Rev. Noble Scheppers. Due to the illness of former co-chair Diane DeSouza, the work of this team has been a bit on hold for much of 2019. The team will be meeting in September to reengage more fully. Their work continues to be encouraging people to share their stories of how they've encountered racism. A meeting with Diocesan Staff, Mission Strategy, and the Dismantling Racism team will be taking place September 26 to chart the way forward.

Creation Care Justice Network — Conveners The Rev. Lise Hildebrandt and Dawn Tesorero. The team reorganized in the beginning of this year, and is focused on evangelizing our diocese regarding the reality of climate change. They've consolidated and cleaned up the "Green Friends" email list in order to provide regular updates. They are seeking to have representatives from each congregation and ministry to share in the work of this Network. They're developing a resolution for convention and are seeking to distill their focus in communication for next year.

Mission Match Asset Mapping — The Rev. Hilary Greene and the Rev. Dave Frederickson. Underutilized application for our diocese. Encourage every parish to fill out their profiles at <https://www.episcopalassetmap.org/dioceses/diocese-massachusetts> in order to help us strengthen connections with one another. They ask for deanery representatives to help parishes connect with this, and especially parish administrators.

20s and 30s Task Force— Co-Chairs Sarah Neumann and the Rev. Suzanne Wade. Engaged in listening and gathering data from across our diocese. Will be presenting full update at our Diocesan Convention, including resolution for a standing committee going forward.

Projects for the upcoming months:

- **Book study open to the entire membership of our diocese**, picked by members of working groups/networks (ie Dismantling Racism may choose James Cone's *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*, or the Interreligious Team may pick Bruce Feiler's *Abraham: A Journey to the Heart of Three Faiths*). A Zoom conversation on the book and led by members of specific network (with a possible "in-person" option) will be held.
- **"Small Church Summit" in the Spring of 2020**. Geared toward congregations with part-time positions for their clergy. We've spoken with the bishop's staff from Western Mass. who have recently held a similar program, and had three times the attendance than they originally thought. Not problem solving focus—ie there are no quick fix solutions—but a chance to come together, explore the current reality, and recognize churches are not alone. We are reaching out to the consultants who helped WMass, and invite them to do something similar. Our plan is to invite churches to send a team of at least 3—and expecting the priests of those with settled clergy positions to attend—for this conversation, and then from there form a "Small Church Network" team.

- **Regional “Wardens’ Day”** — In our commitment to strengthen lay leadership, we will be hosting three regional Wardens’ Day events to build connections, discuss best practices, and learn from each other. We’re currently working with Regional Canons and members of the Bishops’ staff to facilitate and coordinate these events. We plan to have dates finalized by convention to promote.
- **Print more copies of our full Mission Strategy booklet for distribution.** We’re planning to print additional copies of our Strategy and to translate it into Spanish. These will be for:
 - Clergy in New Positions
 - Bishops’ Visitation packets
 - Members of Diocesan Council
 - Deputies of Convention who would like a hard copy (we will send a soft copy in the convention material emails)
 - Those who are native Spanish speakers (the home language most commonly spoken by non-English speakers in our diocese and commonwealth).
- **Create a short video for Convention.** We are working on a video update for our reporting time at Convention highlighting 3-4 stories of how congregations have engaged the three main areas of our Strategy—“Reimagining our Congregations,” “Building our Relationships,” and “Engaging our World.”

Engaging the Mission Strategy Regularly with Diocesan Council

Our Strategy is a well-crafted and important document for the life of our diocese and in the work we are called to engage on behalf of Christ’s kingdom. Similar to the Bible Study time designated at many vestry meetings, we would propose that Council make a permanent agenda item to reflect on a portion of the strategy—and especially the theological underpinnings—at each meeting with a brief time for small group conversation. In so doing, the Council as a whole will have in mind our strategy as a guiding document to our work together. We propose:

- Members will attend the Annual Retreat in January having read the entire strategy document. At the retreat, reflect on the document together with guiding questions.
- At each regular meeting, read aloud the opening scripture and explanatory paragraph of one of the 9 specific goal areas and then spend 7 minutes together in small groups asking “What might God be calling us to in the coming months in relation to this area?” and “How are the parishes in my deanery (or in our diocese) engaging this goal?” (or similar questions).