



New Dreams/New Visions Pilot Project

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

March 2013

Conceived by a small task force in Lent of 2009 and developed and tested over the next three and a half years, the New Dreams/New Visions Pilot Project took a creative approach to two challenges faced by the Episcopal Church:

- the steady increase in small congregations (ASA 100 or less) forced to consider a transition to part-time clergy
- the growing pool of retired clergy interested in part-time ministry

Grounded in the idea of the ministry of all the baptized, the pilot project developed models of support and care for congregations moving to part-time clergy and worked with retired and retiring clergy on new ways of serving a congregation.

ORIGINAL GOALS OF THE NEW DREAMS/NEW VISIONS PILOT PROGRAM

- Work with a targeted group of clergy and congregations
- Engage in a deliberate, thoughtful process to develop healthy models of congregational ministry with lay leaders working in partnership with part-time clergy
- Provide resources and training to enhance existing diocesan transition processes
- Develop research, data, and information to benefit transitions in the Church

FINDINGS

- Small congregations that can no longer support full-time clergy are becoming the norm in the Episcopal Church.
- Small congregations are often vibrant and faithful, serving their communities and proclaiming the love of God in Christ.
- Clergy and congregations can creatively and effectively move from an old model of “being gathered around the minister” to “being gathered around the ministry,” but they need assistance to make this transition.
- There is a vital need for effective models and tools to support congregations transitioning to a part-time priest.

CONCLUSIONS

- The role of diocesan staff in delivering helpful resources and tools to congregations moving to part-time clergy is critical.
- Clergy and lay leaders need to work together to understand and implement new models of “being gathered around the ministry and not the minister.”
- It takes longer than anticipated for clergy to embrace a new way of thinking.
- The pilot project overestimated the flexibility and interest of clergy in moving to another geographic area in order to take a call in retirement.
- The transition to part-time clergy leadership represents a culture shift, and the pilot project overestimated the willingness of congregations to make that transition.
- The Ministry Tools developed by the pilot project are helpful and provide an opportunity for smaller congregations to consider new models of ministry, but they also require training, facilitation and explanation — an appropriate role for diocesan staff.
- The NDNV process is applicable and helpful to all situations of part-time clergy, not just those who are retired.

- The networking of clergy and congregations engaged in similar ministry is critically important.

NEXT STEPS

- The NDNV pilot project formally ended on December 31, 2012.
- Resources and tools developed by NDNV are available through the Episcopal Church Foundation (ECF) and the Office for Transition Ministry at the Church Center.
- Church structures need to provide opportunities for dioceses and congregations transitioning to part-time clergy to network and share experiences and best practices. Members of the Coordinating Committee can assist in that process.

PILOT DIOCESES AND CONGREGATIONS

- Dioceses: Atlanta, Eastern Michigan, East Tennessee, Indianapolis, Iowa, Kansas, Massachusetts, Oklahoma, Southern Ohio, Southeastern Mexico, Southwest Florida, Spokane, Vermont and Western Massachusetts
- Congregations: Emmanuel (Massachusetts), St. Thomas (East Tennessee), St. Joseph's (East Tennessee), St. Alban's (Indianapolis), Grace Church (Kansas), Epiphany and Our Saviour (Southern Ohio)

NDNV COORDINATING COMMITTEE

- The Rev. Canon Thaddeus Bennett (Diocese of Vermont), Project Coordinator
- The Rev. Canon Patricia Coller (Church Pension Group)
- The Rev. Victoria Duncan (Office for Transition Ministry – Episcopal Church Center)
- The Rev. Michael Ehmer (CREDO/Fresh Start, Diocese of Northwest Texas)
- Canon Jill Mathis (Diocese of Pennsylvania), Co-Chair
- The Rev. Laura Queen (Church Pension Group)
- Mr. Donald Romanik (Episcopal Church Foundation), Co-Chair

- Ms. Lynn Schmissrauter (Diocese of East Tennessee)
- The Rev. Canon Matthew Stockard (Diocese of East Carolina)
- The Rev. Walter Taylor (Church Pension Group)

FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTORS

- Diocese of Delaware
- Diocese of Eastern Michigan
- Diocese of Long Island
- Diocese of Maine
- Diocese of Vermont
- Office for Transition Ministry – Episcopal Church Center
- Pilot Dioceses
- Roanridge Grant
- Church Pension Group
- Transition Ministry Conference

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