

## Section I: Introduction to Fresh Start® 3.11

### A. Welcome

Welcome to the latest version of **Fresh Start**, a diocesan-led program to strengthen the leadership skills needed by Episcopal clergy and congregational lay leaders during the critical period of a transition in clergy leadership. For clergy the program also promotes collegial relationships within the diocese and among participants, their bishop and his/her staff. Both the content and the design of the modules contribute to achievement of these purposes.

### Program Standards

To be called **Fresh Start**, a diocesan program must meet the following standards:

- Be overseen by an individual trained through the churchwide training program;
- Have a diocesan coordinator who maintains an on-going relationship with the churchwide program, staying up-to-date on materials and supporting evaluations, etc.;
- Use **Fresh Start** material and methods;
- Offer the *Transition* module; and
- Be supported by the bishop.

A clergy **Fresh Start** program is intended to include the newly ordained, clergy new to the diocese, first-time rectors and first-time assistants. Non-parochial clergy, vocational deacons, any clergy called to a new position, interims, priests-in-charge, and others are frequently included as well. To be called **Fresh Start** a clergy program must meet the above standards and be designed as a series of periodic sessions offered over the course of at least one year. Ideally the bishop should be involved in at least one of these sessions.

### The Curriculum

**Fresh Start's** content is based on three key leadership principles: the theory of transition, the importance of relationship-building, and the need for self-care. Each of these is represented in a core module, all of which are highly recommended for inclusion in any clergy **Fresh Start** program:

- *Transition*: an introduction to the underlying concept of the theories of transition and its impact on congregational dynamics and leadership;

- *History-Sharing and Understanding*: a basic building block of relationships, offering a structured way to explore the history of the congregation and the diocese which one is entering; and
- *Family and Friends: Leading an Integrated Life*: a look at structuring one's life to meet the multiple priorities of work, leisure, and family/friends and the importance of building support networks.

A fourth core module, *Entering a New System*, offers guidance on how to effectively become part of a new congregation.

The remaining modules cluster around the three principles and, because leadership is at the heart of navigating through a time of transition, leadership in general. The diversity and number of modules allow dioceses to tailor their programs to address the issues of greatest concern to their clergy and congregations.

Most modules contain two sections: a PowerPoint presentation with extensive lecture notes and a Resources Section with special instructions, an agenda, reproducible handouts, and a bibliography. All can be used with clergy and/or lay leaders. Separate versions for use in congregational settings are included for several of the modules in the resource, *Fresh Start in Your Congregation* and in a downloadable resource, *Fresh Start in the Search Process* (see below).

### **Special Resources**

**Fresh Start 3.11** material includes two versions of *Fresh Start in Your Congregation* – one for clergy and one for lay leaders. This resource provides suggestions for the first two years of a new ministry and includes versions of some of the relationship-building modules to use in a congregational setting. The module, *Entering a New System*, provides a way to introduce the resource and help clergy and/or lay leaders plan how to use it.

A Facilitator Resources section and an extensive bibliography provide background information and support to **Fresh Start** facilitators. Included in the former are basic facilitation tips as well as information on how to structure a **Fresh Start** program for your diocese.

Because a congregation goes into transition when the current clergyperson announces he/she is leaving, *Fresh Start in the Search Process* is a supplemental resource to bring **Fresh Start** to lay leaders during this early phase. Designed to be used by diocesan transition ministers, search/transition consultants, and interims it may be downloaded free from the Episcopal Church Foundation's *Vital Practices* website ([www.ecfvp.org](http://www.ecfvp.org) – look under Tools, then Clergy Transition to find).

## **Organization of Material**

Because we view this curriculum as dynamic, with the ability to be constantly updated and expanded, we have tried to keep its organization simple and straightforward. The Facilitator Resources and Bibliography are the second and third sections, respectively. The fourth and fifth sections are ***Fresh Start in Your Congregation – for clergy and lay leaders***, respectively. The modules are in the sixth section, in alphabetical order by title so that new ones can be readily incorporated. As new material is added, the Table of Contents is changed.

## **Feedback**

We welcome your feedback. The curriculum is only valuable if you use it and if your **Fresh Start** participants get something out of it, so let us know what works and what you would change. Just send an e-mail with your feedback or comments to [FreshStart@episcopalfoundation.org](mailto:FreshStart@episcopalfoundation.org). Thank you for your ministry and involvement in **Fresh Start**!

## B. A Brief History of Fresh Start

In the early 1990s The Episcopal Church began conversations focusing on transitions-ministry concepts. Cornerstone, a ministry of the Episcopal Church Foundation (led by the Rev. James C. Fenhagen, II, and Mr. William S. Craddock, Jr.) picked up on a concept conceived in the Diocese of Missouri called The Transition Project. The concept led to a program called “Fresh Start” in the Diocese of New Hampshire, under the leadership of the Rev. Canon V. Gene Robinson, Canon to the Ordinary. Other leading voices in this early development included the Rev. Loren Mead and the Rev. Roy Oswald of the Alban Institute and the Rev. Hartshorn Murphy of the Diocese of Los Angeles, who wrote the initial “transitions project notebook” for Cornerstone.

Simultaneously Cornerstone commissioned the Grubb Institute to research especially fruitful “learning moments” in the lives of clergy, congregations, and church institutions. The research identified the period of new ministry and mutual adjustment between clergy leadership and a congregation, i.e. times of change, as one of the most fertile times for learning. The Grubb Institute research also indicated that building trust through coaching among the bishop and new clergy in the first year of service in the diocese was crucial to the future health of the relationships. As a result of this research, Cornerstone began an initiative which came to be called “Clergy/Congregation Transition: Beginning a New Pastoral Relationship.” The program was pilot tested, and a small number of dioceses adopted its model.

At the National Deployment Officers Conference in 1998 three diocesan deployment officers (the Rev. Canon Melford E. Holland, Jr., Pennsylvania; the Rev. Canon V. Gene Robinson, New Hampshire; and the Rev. Canon Thaddeus Bennett, Los Angeles) each presented plenary sessions on different transition issues. The presentations were enthusiastically received, and participants began to believe that this initiative, eventually named **Fresh Start**, could be a significant resource to the wider church. Following this meeting a collaborative partnership was created among three groups: the Episcopal Church Foundation’s Cornerstone; the Office for Ministry Development; and the Church Deployment Office. These partners developed an ambitious five-year plan on a very modest budget with anticipated income from the Episcopal Church Foundation and the General Convention.

In June 2000 a Luce Foundation grant enabled the collaborative organizations to distill and clarify a strategic plan for **Fresh Start** and launch a national program. Two leading authors of the original curriculum were the Rev. Canons V. Gene Robinson and Thaddeus Bennett. Together with the Dioceses of New Hampshire and Los Angeles, three other dioceses (Alabama, East Tennessee and Ohio) became pilots in this new collaborative transitions project. Ms. J. Ann Holtz, of East Tennessee, was hired as the church-wide program coordinator.

Over the next five years, with the guidance and leadership of the collaborative partners, over fifty dioceses enrolled in and introduced the **Fresh Start** program providing transitional materials and resources to clergy and congregations throughout the United States and Canada. Facilitator training sessions were conducted twice a year providing diocesan facilitators with necessary instruction to adapt and present the **Fresh Start** program in their dioceses. The primary funding partner and lead agency during this phenomenal growth period was the Episcopal Church Foundation.

A new revised curriculum was introduced in 2003 with additional materials for lay and congregational applications. CREDO Institute, Inc. became a fourth collaborative and funding partner of **Fresh Start** that year

In 2005 a comprehensive evaluation of **Fresh Start** was conducted using a quantitative survey instrument and extensive interviews. A major finding in this analysis was that the **Fresh Start** experience greatly strengthened the relationships among diocesan clergy in transition, diocesan staff and congregational leadership.

In 2006 the Church Deployment Office assumed the lead-agency role from the Episcopal Church Foundation. In the fall of 2006 the principals agreed to assign the lead agency function and role to CREDO Institute, Inc., effective the following year. In 2007 the **Fresh Start** organization was restructured to include three part-time coordinators, each responsible for particular areas, rather than one full-time coordinator responsible for the entire program. After a year of experience, the number was reduced to two part-time coordinators – one for Facilitation and one for Curriculum – who would also serve as liaisons to the various dioceses.

The **Fresh Start 3.0** curriculum, rolled out in December 2007, addressed concerns raised in the 2005 national evaluation and feedback from individual facilitators. The 2.0 curriculum – consisting of 28 separate modules covering a variety of subjects dealing with transition issues – was completely rewritten. In addition to providing more in-depth material, each module was accompanied by a resource section to give facilitators additional background information and suggestions on how to design and deliver the module. Most modules could be used with clergy or lay leaders, although a few were labeled “for clergy groups only.” At the same time, the **Fresh Start** website was redesigned to make resources, curriculum, and materials readily accessible to facilitators and to allow for up-dates to be made available to the entire facilitator cadre in a quick and efficient manner.

In 2009, again at the request of diocesan facilitators, the “clergy-only” modules were revised so that all the material became suitable for use with lay leaders as well as with clergy. This revision, **Fresh Start 3.1**, furthered the original intention that the program support laity, as well as clergy.

Since then two new modules (*Dialogue: Searching for Common Ground* and *Polarities: Differences to be Managed*) have been added and material appropriate for use with lay leaders at the start of a period of congregational transition has been developed (**Fresh Start in the Search Process**). **Fresh Start 3.11** incorporates these changes, and the modules have been reformatted to be compatible with Microsoft PowerPoint 2010.

In July of 2012 the Episcopal Church Foundation assumed full responsibility for **Fresh Start**, and the program entered an exciting new phase of its development as ECF began to look for ways to make it more available to clergy and lay leaders. Each of these changes has further strengthened the program. But throughout its shifting developmental path and evolution, **Fresh Start's** purpose has not changed: to support clergy and congregations in transition.

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