

Report on Congregational Development to the 2010 Synod

Submitted by the Rev. James Hobby, Canon for Congregational Development

Over the last year the work of congregational development in the Diocese has focused on laying foundations (in both principle and practice), strengthening congregations, discovering resources and developing strategic partnerships. Here are some of the highlights from 2010:

- We have been working with Tom Herrick and the Titus Institute for Church Planting to develop a three-phase assessment process for identifying potential church planters. See the 2011 goals for more on this.
- Throughout the Diocese individuals and congregations have been exploring where and how to plant new congregations in such places as Valdosta, Statesboro, Brunswick, Albany, Alachua, Daytona Beach, Tallahassee, Jacksonville, Palm Coast.
- A group gathered in September to form the Diocesan Church Planting Network. This group is open to any individual or congregation that wants to be involved in planting new congregations in our Diocese.
- We had 9 different folks attend 3 very helpful church planting conferences: Anglican 1,000, Exponential and Missio Intensive. See the 2011 goals for more about these conferences.
- As a Diocese we invested in St. Luke's Community of Life over this last year providing resources that enabled them to do the tough work of self-assessment and long-range planning. The strategic plan that their Vestry has developed is a great example of the kind vision that is faith-filled, motivational and practical.

Goals for 2011

In order to participate faithfully in the call to ACNA through Archbishop Duncan to plant 1,000 churches in 5 years, our diocese would need to plant approximately 20 new congregations by the end of 2014 (roughly doubling the size of the diocese when transfer congregations are included). The following annual goals would allow us to achieve that overarching objective:

2011 – 2 new congregations begun	2013 – 5 new congregations begun
2012 – 3 new congregations begun	2014 – 10 new congregations begun

Work toward those goals is already underway in initial stages in Valdosta, Albany, Brunswick, Statesboro, Alachua, and Daytona Beach.

If we wish to establish 20 new congregations in the next 4 years, we will need to identify leaders with gift mixes that facilitate church planting. To do this the diocese will do the following:

- Planter Discernment
2011 – Include an initial on-line church planting assessment tool in the ordination process (with the assumption that the majority of new priests in our diocese will need to plant a congregation rather than find an already existing position). The Diocesan Discernment Team and the Board of Examining Chaplains will use this initial assessment to help guide the training of ordinands.
- Potential Planter Interview
2011 – Have an extended interview with 10 individuals/couples who seem to have the gifting, temperament and experience needed to plant a new congregation.

- Planter Assessment
2011 – Do the final phase of assessment for 5 individuals/couples whom God seems to be calling to plant a church.
- Planter Training
2011 – Train 2 church planters through Titus Institute’s Boot Camp.
- Planter Coaching
2011 – Make 1 CoachNet-certified coach available to diocesan planters. This coaching relationship could be with the Canon for Congregational Development, with Tom Herrick of Titus Institute, or with any of CoachNet’s coaches.

Along with raising up and equipping planters the diocese needs to encourage existing congregations to participate in church planting (even before they have all the resources they think they need to be comfortably established). This will be part of the work of the Diocesan Church Planting Network. The Network will meet quarterly. Our next meeting is scheduled for January 7th and 8th in Jacksonville. We encourage as many people as possible to attend Anglican 1,000 (January 25 – 27, 2011 in Plano, TX) and the Exponential Conference (April 26 – 29, 2011).

As we move forward in church planting, the diocese needs to prayerfully discern where and among whom to plant new churches. It seems that a good starting point geographically is to find cities that have both a state university and a Super Walmart. Establishing congregations in these hub cities will be crucial to reaching the small towns that surround them. The other part of our prayerful discernment is to identify the “peoples” with whom the Lord is connecting us (e.g. prisoners, refugees, professors, Muslims, etc.). As we discern the folks that we seem to be most effective in reaching, we will be able to look to reaching those folks in different geographical settings.

Finally, here are funding principles that underlie the budget for congregational development:

- Church plants should be self-supporting from the beginning. The resources for the plant are already there, in “the harvest” and in the community. This means that most church planters will need to find appropriate employment for the first few years of a plant. During this season of engaging the culture of a community, building relationships and establishing the core group, the planter will be doing what he/she will be asking of every lay person in the congregation.
- The Diocese will “infuse” funds in a strategic manner to help a congregation’s ministry move forward. For example, the diocese will help cover such expenses as assessment, moving, training and coaching. This is different than the “start-up” model that pays the salary of a planter for the first years. The Diocese will spend more money on plants later in their life to assist them through typical growth barriers (many of which have staffing implications).
- The Diocese will work with sponsoring parishes and planters in the funding process. Most funding will be based on the 1/3 - 1/3 - 1/3 formula with the diocese providing 1/3, the sponsoring parish providing 1/3 and the planter raising 1/3 through missionary-style support raising or “tent-making” employment.

The Lord’s call through Archbishop Duncan to plant 1,000 churches is a call to lift up our eyes and see the harvest (John 4:35). An insulated focus on ourselves is no longer possible. Every individual and each congregation needs to discern their part in this remarkable adventure. May God use us to accomplish His call by His grace!