

Covenant Agreement Documents

Diocesan Council
June 10, 2009

Covenant Memorandum

For nearly five years, Diocesan Council and the Bishop's Office have encouraged our congregations to assess the vitality and viability of their ministries and consider how they might increase the capacity to do ministry. In 2004, six specific Ministry Capacity Areas (aspects of the life and ministry of congregations) were identified to assist congregations in this work. Now, as a result of the Covenant Forums held in April/May 2009, two additional Ministry Capacity Areas were added. The eight Ministry Capacity Areas are:

1. Vision/Future Goals/Dreams: To what ministry is God calling this congregation?
2. External Ministry Contexts: Where and to whom has God called this congregation to minister?
3. Spiritual Growth and Development: How do we as a community of faith nurture one another in the knowledge and love of Christ?
4. Christian Identity, Gifts, Strengths, and Challenges: What gifts has God given to this congregation to do ministry?
5. Church Growth/Evangelism Capacity – How does God enable this congregation to invite, form, and send disciples?
6. Stewardship: How do we understand and practice stewardship of God's abundant goodness?
7. Systems Functionality (Viability): How well do we carry out the internal functions of our church in God's name?
8. Mutual Ministry: How well does this congregation partner together as clergy and laity?

In order to encourage our congregations to identify benchmarks for vitality and viability, Council first adopted congregational ministry "expectations" in November 2006. Congregations were then provided with a self-assessment tool to discern the vitality of their present ministry, the viability of their systems, and areas for improvement.

Meanwhile, the Bishop's Office and Diocesan committees and commissions have offered ongoing training opportunities, networking and resource-sharing for congregations to assist them in meeting these expectations.

Building on these initiatives, the Bishop and Council now invite our congregations to enter in to covenant with the Diocese in order to enhance their vitality and viability and strengthen their capacity to do ministry. This covenant proposes to encourage congregations to continue to live into ongoing cycles of self-assessment, planning, and expansion of their ministry capacity. For its part, the Diocese will commit itself to provide tools, resources, training and opportunities to our congregations, empowering them to live into this covenant.

Attached please find:

1. Theological Statement of Covenant.
2. Our Covenant to Increase Ministry Capacity and Provide Support for Congregations.
3. Two means by which congregational vitality, viability, and ministry capacity may be evaluated.
 - A. Exploring Our Congregation's Vitality and Ministry Capacity
 - B. Characteristics of Congregational Viability

For more information, please contact The Rev. Canon Gregory Jacobs at 973-430-9915 or [gjacobson@dioceseofnewark.org](mailto:gjacobs@dioceseofnewark.org).

Theological Statement **of** **Covenant**

God is calling us as diocese and congregations to be in covenant with each other so that we may be the hands, feet and heart of Jesus Christ in the world.

Jeremiah 31: 33

But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

OUR COVENANT

To Increase Ministry Capacity and Provide Support for Congregations

The Congregations of the Diocese of Newark Commit Themselves to:

- Regularly assessing their vitality and ministry capacity in light of Exploring Our Congregation's Vitality and Ministry Capacity
- Regularly reviewing and updating their ministry plan
- Sharing their current plan with Bishop during visitations
- Using the ministry plan as part of mutual ministry reviews
- Regularly assessing their viability in light of Characteristics of Congregational Viability

If issues of concern arise with respect to one or more of these viability characteristics:

- The congregation has the option to request an assessment to address these issues of concern
- The Bishop has the option to request an assessment to address these issues of concern

The Diocese of Newark Commits Itself to:

- Providing congregational growth and development tools and resources, including those identified in Exploring Our Congregation's Vitality and Ministry Capacity
- Providing assessment teams to assist congregations in addressing issues raised by a review of Characteristics of Congregational Viability
- Training clergy and lay leaders to effectively assist congregations to address issues raised by a review of Characteristics of Congregational Viability

- Providing support for:
 - Training (with expectation that lessons and best practices will be shared)
 - Strategic Ministry Planning
 - Outreach Ministry
 - Property Maintenance and Revitalization
 - Congregational Growth and Development
 - New Ministry Initiatives

- Facilitating the use of consultants that will assist congregations to assess vitality, viability and increase ministry capacity

- Providing opportunities to be part of congregational learning communities (e.g., Congregational Development Initiative, the Black Congregations Initiative, Industrial Areas Foundation, and Alternative Worship[TAG])

- Encouraging cooperative ministries and partnerships (e.g., District ministry initiatives, Lutheran/Episcopal partnerships, and shared congregations ministry initiatives)

Diocesan Council

Exploring Our Congregation's Vitality and Ministry Capacity

(Revised & Presented June 2009)

Diocesan Goal:

For all congregations in the Diocese of Newark to be vibrant, life-giving faith communities that proclaim the Gospel and make it relevant in their unique environment.

Underlying Strategic Assumptions:

Diocesan leaders are committed to exercising adaptive leadership. The role of the Bishop's Office and diocesan leadership is to support and encourage congregations as they discern who they are and to what they are called in each of the following ministry areas. It is not the role of diocesan staff, commissions or committees to tell congregations who they are or who they should be.

Exploring Our Congregation's Vitality and Ministry Capacity is a means of initiating a dialogue with congregations about how they might first examine and then begin to address their capacity to exercise their ministry in eight vital areas. It is the hope of the Bishop's office and diocesan leadership that from this self-examination and discussions the entire diocese will commit itself to engage in the work of mutual up-building, support and transformation.

As a starting point, each congregation is invited to make a self-assessment using these vitality characteristics, ministry capacity questions, and issues explorations to identify areas of ministry in which they are presently strong and have resources to offer, as well as to consider those areas where needs are unaddressed or help is needed to address vitality and grow ministry capacity.

Congregations should not feel compelled to consider the ministry capacity areas in order or all at once. However, this self-assessment should be viewed in the context of the on-going covenant responsibility of each congregation to "develop a ministry plan with achievable measurable goals and objectives."

I. CAPACITY AREA: EXTERNAL MINISTRY CONTEXTS

Where and to whom is our congregation called to minister?

1. Each congregation will actively seek information about its mission field (the area in which it is located).
2. Each congregation will consider information about the area in which they are located as they develop ministry activities.

Ministry Capacity Questions

1. In what ways do you seek information about your community or neighborhood?
2. What have you learned from that information that is organizing your approach to what you do as a congregation?

Issues in Exploring External Ministry Contexts:

- Neighborhood characteristics/population(s)
- Neighborhood preferences/needs/power analysis
- Other nearby ministries/activities/issues

Tools and Resources to Help Explore this Ministry Area:

- Relational Asset Mapping
- Community/Neighborhood interviews & surveys
- Demographic studies (e.g., Percept FirstView)
- Evangelism & Congregational Life Center (Episcopal Church)

II. CAPACITY AREA: CHRISTIAN IDENTITY, GIFTS, STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES

What gifts has God given to us to do ministry?

1. Each congregation has big picture priorities that can be articulated by the person in the pew.
2. Each congregation can demonstrate measurable effort in attempting to address its priorities
3. Each congregation regularly clarifies and articulates its strengths.
4. Each congregation regularly clarifies and articulates its challenges.
5. Each congregation understands its effect on and reputation in its community.

Ministry Capacity Questions

1. What are your top 4 priorities as a congregation?
2. What have you done in the last two years to live into those priorities?
3. What are your greatest congregational *strengths* to achieve those priorities?
4. What are your greatest congregational *challenges* to achieve those priorities?
5. For what is your congregation best known in your neighborhood? And how do you know this?

Issues in Exploring Christian Identity, Gifts, Strengths and Challenges

- Clarity of Congregation's Mission
- Successful Ministries of the Congregation
- Individual Gifts of Congregation's members and clergy
- Congregation's Core Values

Tools and Resources to Help Explore this Ministry Area:

- Congregational Life Cycle Analysis
- Gifts Inventories/Discernment
- Bible learning and study models
- Appreciative Inquiry
- Congregational History & Timeline Learnings (analyzing finances, liturgical changes, buildings, systems, community changes, impact of diocesan and national church events)
- Mutual Ministry Review Models
- SWOT Analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats)
- Evangelism & Congregational Life Center (Episcopal Church)
- Mission Leadership Center (Episcopal Church)
- Diocesan Christian Formation Commission

III. CAPACITY AREA: VISION/FUTURE GOALS/DREAMS

To what ministry is God calling us at this time?

1. Each congregation identifies its unique purpose based on its understanding of God's will for it.
2. Long term possibilities for the future will be derived from each congregation's unique overall mission and those possibilities will be revisited each year.

Ministry Capacity Questions

1. What do you think God wants from and for your congregation?
2. What possibilities does your congregation see for itself in 5 years? In 10 years?

Issues in Exploring Vision/Future Goals/Dreams

- In relation to context, identity, gifts . . .
- What is our capacity for and call to ministry?

Tools and Resources to Help Explore this Ministry Area:

- Group Discernment activities
- Biblical Call stories
- Group Visioning sessions
- Mutual Ministry Review Models
- Evangelism & Congregational Life Center (Episcopal Church)

IV. CAPACITY AREA: SYSTEMS FUNCTIONALITY (VIABILITY)

How well do we carry out the internal functions of our church in God's name?

1. Congregations will meet all canonical responsibilities. For example:
 - Parochial reports will be turned in by March 1
 - Audits will be turned in by September 1
 - Diocesan pledges will be turned in by December 1
2. The trend for both the number of pledges and the total amount of pledges consistently increase over time.
3. Each congregation finds ways to discern members' gifts and seeks to engage all of its members in congregational priorities
4. Each congregation consistently seeks to expand the number of people involved in leadership to engage in succession planning for leaders and to train and support its leaders.
5. Each congregation actively maintains safe, attractive, accessible buildings for ministry use.
6. Vestries regularly devote time to identifying and developing congregational ministries
7. Each congregation regularly operates with balanced budgets
8. Any excess of expenses over income will result from strategic decisions to invest in growth or ministry

Ministry Capacity Questions

1. What was your record with your canonical responsibilities last year?
 - When did you turn in your Audit?
 - When did you turn in your Parochial Report?
 - When did you turn in your Pledge Card?
2. What was your members' pledge history for the last 5 years?
of Pledges: _____ _____ _____ _____ _____
Pledge Amount: _____ _____ _____ _____ _____
3. How do you identify members' individual gifts and engage them with your priorities?
4. In what primary ways do you recruit, empower, and support people for leadership?
5. What are the top 3 priorities / needs for your buildings?
6. What's the most exciting conversation your vestry has had about ministry and mission in the last six months?
7. Of the last 5 years—how many ended with a deficit?
8. If you have had deficit (s)—in what ways was the deficit an investment in ministry?

Issues in Exploring Systems Functionality

- Communication (tools, formal & informal means)
- Congregational decision-making (power analysis)
- Buildings & Physical Assets
- Finance
- Fulfillment of canonical responsibilities
- Leadership recruitment and training

Tools and Resources to Help Explore this Ministry Area:

- Diocesan Viability Characteristics
- Eight Quality Characteristics of Growing Congregations (Natural Congregational Development list)
- Diocesan Property Guide
- Episcopal Church Manual of Business Methods in Church Affairs
- Financial Audits
- Diocesan Bethsaida accessibility audits
- Job descriptions (Diocesan website)
- Diocesan Property Manager (Jim Caputo)
- Diocesan Finance Office

V. CAPACITY AREA: CHURCH GROWTH / EVANGELISM CAPACITY

How does God enable us to invite, form, and send out disciples?

1. Average Sunday Attendance (**ASA**) consistently increases over time.
Note: ASA reflects increasing participation and growth.
2. The person in the pew can describe the unique characteristics of your congregation
3. Each congregation assesses the reasons new members first visited to enhance its ability to attract new potential members.
4. Each congregation understands the reasons new members joined, to enhance its ability to build its membership.
5. Congregations understand the faith experience of their new members; so that they can best understand and respond to ministry opportunities

Ministry Capacity Questions

1. What has been the trend in your ASA (Average Sunday Attendance) in the last 10 years?
2. Why did the people who most recently joined the congregation come to church the first time?
3. Of those most recent members, why did they join?
4. What percentage of people who joined in the last year are not Episcopalians?
5. How are we actively engaged in evangelism?
6. What role do our youth play in church growth and evangelism?

Issues in Exploring Church Growth/Evangelism Capacity:

- Openness to grow
- Readiness for Growth
- Language for inviting (Radical Welcome)
- Ability to share
- Welcoming & Incorporation

Tools and Resources to Help Explore this Ministry Area:

- Church Growth Continuum
- Are you Ready?
- Groundwork
- Start Up Start Over
- Communications/website assessment
- Congregational Life Cycle
- S. Spellers, "Radical Hospitality"
- Evangelism & Congregational Life Center (Episcopal Church)

VI. CAPACITY AREA: MUTUAL MINISTRY***How well do we partner as clergy and laity?****

1. Each congregation is able to illustrate effective shared ministry between its clergy and laity.
2. Each congregation's Clergy and Vestry will engage in annual mutual ministry review.

Ministry Capacity Questions

1. What are the greatest strengths and challenges of your clergy/lay partnership?
2. When was your last Mutual Ministry Review?

Issues in Exploring Mutual Ministry:

- History, especially history of relationships with clergy (Clergy styles, clergy role(s), clergy tenure and how clergy left)
- Clarity about gifts and expectations of clergy, vestry and congregation
- Gifts congregation seeks to match with a future clergy person (search)
- Realistic expectations for current clergy

Tools and Resources to Help Explore this Ministry Area:

- Mutual Ministry Review Information
- Congregational Timeline activities
- Mutual Ministry Review Models

****Area needing special attention during a clergy leadership transition or during conflict with the clergy**

VII. CAPACITY AREA: SPIRITUAL GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

How do we as a community of faith nurture one another in the knowledge and love of Christ?

1. Each congregation creatively and authentically lives out the Baptismal promise to “continue the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers”.
2. Worship is both vibrant and fresh in expression and rooted in tradition with the result that people are energized and inspired for daily life.
3. Worship expresses the cultural diversity of the congregation and its neighboring communities.
4. The planning and leadership of worship and spiritual activities invites participation and engages the creativity of the entire congregation.
5. There is a regular and comprehensive review of worship and spiritual activities in all its facets, especially worship times, alternative services/venues, and liturgies.
6. Both clergy and laity are engaged in the ministry of pastoral care.
7. The vestry, clergy and congregation both corporately and individually have adopted a spiritual discipline and /or Rule of Life.

Ministry Capacity Questions

- How is worship/liturgy planned and reviewed in your congregation?
- How are liturgy participants (e.g., Altar Guild, choir, acolytes, lay readers) identified, recruited and trained?
- What opportunities are provided for spiritual growth in your congregation?
- To what extent do youth participate in liturgical and spiritual formation activities?
- Are lay people significantly involved in your pastoral care and healing ministries?
- Are there opportunities to do joint worship and spiritual formation with other congregations?

Issues in Exploring Spiritual Growth and Development:

- Worship that is age, culture, gender, sexual orientation, and socio-economic inclusive.
- Worship that provides a welcoming and user-friendly experience for newcomers
- Christian formation for all ages

- Retreats and continuing education opportunities for clergy and lay people.
- Pastoral Care
- Inclusion of youth and young adults in activities

Tools and Resources to Help Explore this Ministry Area:

- Liturgy and Alternative worship workshops
- “Two or Three Gathered Together”
- Pastoral Care programs (e.g., Stephen Ministries)
- Formation programs for youth (e.g., J2A)
- Materials and courses on Anglicanism and the Episcopal Church (e.g., Via Media, Alpha course, Education for Ministry)
- Mission Leadership Center (Episcopal Church)
- Diocesan Christian Formation Commission

VIII. MINISTRY CAPACITY AREA: STEWARDSHIP

How do we understand and practice stewardship of God’s abundant goodness?

1. Members of the congregation understand stewardship as their response to God’s love and God’s call to tend and care for the whole of creation, including ourselves, our possessions, and this earth.
2. Clergy and congregation practice simplicity of life and generosity in giving
3. Congregation through the leadership of vestry and clergy are asked to support the ministry of the church with their time, talent, and treasure, especially through the practices of proportionate giving (or tithing) and witnessing to God’s work in their own lives.

Ministry Capacity Questions

1. Does your congregation practice year-around stewardship?
2. Does your vestry lead by example in its stewardship?
3. How does your congregation understand stewardship?
4. How does your congregation educate and engage youth in the practice of stewardship?

Issues in Exploring Stewardship:

- Congregation’s history of pledging
- Fund-raising vs. Stewardship
- Frequency and depth of stewardship education
- Gifts discernment to identify talent
- “Greening” your congregation and church facilities

Tools and Resources to Help Explore this Ministry Area:

- TENS (The Episcopal Network for Stewardship)
- Diocesan Stewardship Committee
- Asset mapping (gifts and talents)
- Gifts discernment activities
- Provincial stewardship workshops
- Energy Audits (Interfaith Power & Light)
- Advocacy Center (Episcopal Church)

Characteristics of Congregational Viability *Episcopal Diocese of Newark*

(Presented June 2009)

Viability characteristics are those elements of a congregational and diocesan life that are considered basic and essential such as the strength and stability of a congregation’s finances, property, and administrative functions. They represent the fundamental obligations and responsibilities that each congregation undertakes as a constituent part of this diocese.

Every congregation should regularly review these Characteristics of Congregational Viability as a means of discovering potential areas of concern in its ministry.

If the congregation discovers that one or more of these viability issues should be addressed, it may request an assessment to address those areas of concern.

If the Bishop discovers one or more of these viability issues is not being met by a congregation, the Bishop may request an assessment to address those areas of concern.

Viability Characteristics	Assessment to Address Issues of Concern
<p>Church Growth/Evangelism</p> <p>1. The congregation has shown consistently stable or increasing Average Sunday Attendance (ASA) over a 5-year period.</p>	<p>A team of resource people will help the congregation assess its ministries and its church growth capacity and assist in creating a ministry plan and/or strategy to address identified areas of concern.</p>

<p>Property</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. The Congregation maintains safe, attractive, accessible buildings for ministry use 3. The congregation does annual inspections of the rectory 	<p>A team of resource people will help the congregation with a comprehensive property assessment and assist in creating a maintenance/repair plan and/or strategy to address identified areas of concern.</p>
<p>Legal Liability</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. The congregation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Maintains adequate insurance (including property and directors and officers insurance) ▪ Has leadership trained in safe church, maintains safe properties ▪ Is not exposed to legal liability. 	<p>A team of resource people will help the congregation assess their legal liability and assist in creating a plan and/or strategy to address identified areas of concern.</p>
<p>Adherence to the Canons</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. The congregation elects a vestry or executive committee, as provided by its by-laws and sends representation to a convention of the diocese in accordance with the diocesan canons. 6. The congregations is not <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Employing a member of the clergy under ecclesiastical censure or process ▪ Permitting a church edifice to be used for purposes incompatible with its consecration; ▪ Pursuing any persistent course of conduct inconsistent with the doctrine, discipline, or worship of the Episcopal Church. 7. The purchase, use, or conveyance of property of the congregation, or the incurring of debt, conforms to the Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church and of the Diocese. 	<p>A team of resource people will help the congregation review its compliance with the canons and assist in creating a plan to address any issues of concern.</p>

<p>Financial:</p> <p>8. <u>Diocesan Pledge</u> :The congregation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has made a diocesan pledge, • Is no more than 12 months behind in the payment of its pledge • Over a 5-year period has not shown a consistent decline in its contribution <p>9. <u>Congregational Pledges</u>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The number of pledges and/or pledge income over a 5-year reflect a modest increase. ▪ Pledge and plate is at least 50% of the congregations’ operating income. <p>10. <u>Financial Stability</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The congregation is financially self-supporting and financially stable. ▪ Financial reports do not reveal invasion of the principal portion of endowment funds. <p>11. <u>Reporting Compliance</u> All required diocesan and national church reports, certificates of audit as required by the diocesan canons are timely submitted.</p> <p>12. <u>Clergy compensation/benefits</u> The congregation has met the minimum clergy compensation and benefits determined and required by resolution of Diocesan Convention.</p> <p>13. <u>Financial Obligations</u> The congregation is current on loan repayments or other obligations to the diocese.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">A team of resource people will help the congregation engage in a comprehensive analysis of its stewardship and its financial situation and assist in creating a financial plan and/or strategy to address identified areas of concern.</p>
--	--

<p>Comprehensive</p> <p>14. The congregation can provide full and accurate information on the state of the congregation and its affairs.</p> <p>15. The congregation is able to search diligently for and elect a rector or accept the Bishop's appointment of a vicar or priest-in-charge.</p> <p>16. Congregation holds mutual ministry review at least once every 3 years.</p>	<p>A team of resource people will help the congregation with a comprehensive assessment of all aspects of their system and assist the congregation in creating a plan and/or strategy to address identified areas of concern.</p>
<p>17. Circumstances and issues of concern not listed above that raise questions about the viability of the congregation.</p>	<p>Next steps as deemed appropriate</p>