



**REQUIEM OR RENAISSANCE
PROJECT CHARTER**



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INTRODUCTION: THEOLOGICAL FRAME

Why are you sleeping? --Luke 22:46

Average Sunday attendance: down. Average membership numbers: down. Yearly pledge income: down. The statistics don't lie. For the past forty years, and accelerating like a train down a mountain for the last twenty, the Episcopal Church and indeed the entire Christian mainstream has been losing strength, losing growth, losing life. If you asked an average American, "What's an Episcopalian?" they would have no idea if it was a geological age or a specific kind of hedge fund.

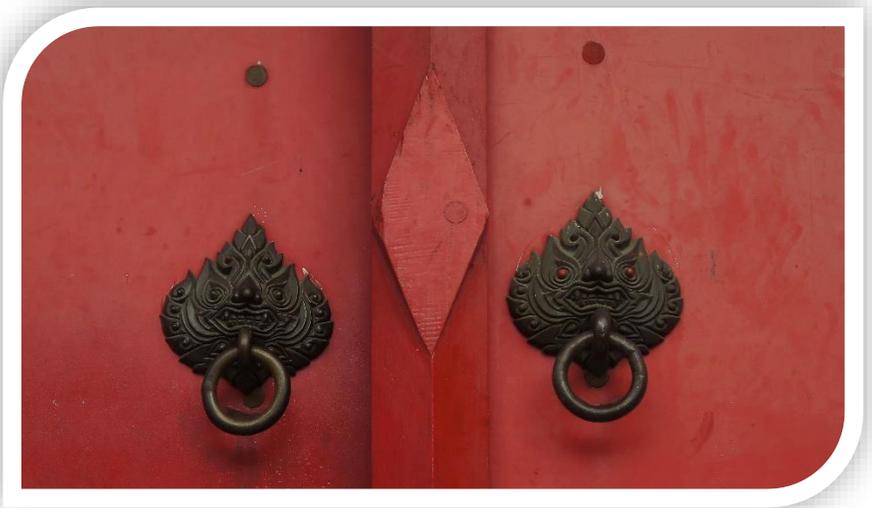
This decline toward death has led to a deep underlying anxiety in our churches. We have been sitting by the hospital bed of our dying church, mourning it and blaming ourselves for its failure.

But there are two distinct options here. There is death that ends in death, as in, end of story, here lies the Episcopal Church, crumbled to dust and irrelevance. And then there is death that leads to resurrection. That is a death freely entered into, an embrace of the Cross that is undergirded by the knowledge that God will call us into and through this death into new life.

The point of openly acknowledging the decline and death of the church is not to lock the doors never to open them again. The point of embracing the death of the church is the same as it is for us as individuals—Jesus' death on the Cross was above all the source of our liberation. This is the choice that is laid before us: death leading to death, or death leading to resurrection.

Every time we embrace a death—the death of our pride, the death of our old goals, the death of our privilege, the death of our preconceived ideas of what a church should be and do, the death of our desire for "success"—we will find that resurrection is breaking forth everywhere around us. Investing in the path of death and resurrection, the terribly difficult and joyfully liberating path of discipleship as the Body of Christ, will awaken in us a vitality that is far more compelling to seekers than all our old, self-serving, desperate, half-believed-in "strategies."

If we can embrace membership in the dying Body of Christ, we the Church can know the joy of being the resurrected Living Body of Christ. All we have to do is take Jesus' words to heart: "Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit."



WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT: REQUIEM OR RENAISSANCE

Do you want to be made well? --John 5:6

Once we've named the struggle and realized that it gives us an incredible spiritual freedom, we can start to have courageous conversations about what this means and what we're called to do about it. The structured forum for this conversation to happen in the Diocese of Missouri is called Requiem or Renaissance

Requiem or Renaissance is an 18-month discernment and skills-building program for all congregations currently receiving diocesan financial aid. Prior to this point, there has been no accountability structure for the funds dispensed to aided congregations. This is not only a disservice to the diocesan household whose pledges help support these congregations, but it is unfair to the congregations themselves in that they receive no support or training in how best to use the financial resources we entrust to them as part of the constellation of their life and ministry.

In this program, our aided congregations will enter a discernment process that will help them determine God's call to them: to a Requiem, a holy ending of this congregation's ministry in this location at this time, or a Renaissance, a church re-plant with a new vision. As they are discerning, they will build skills to live out the call they articulate.

Any and all outcomes are on the table, from starting from scratch with house church meetings, to closing and selling buildings, to collaborating with other ministries or secular partners to revitalize, and no doubt many other possibilities we can't imagine yet. We want our congregations to walk into their futures with eyes wide open and clear self-determination—not be forced into fewer and fewer options by declining money and membership.

Both the Requiem path and the Renaissance path are intended to lead to resurrection—but just as in the gospels, the resurrected Body of Christ will probably look unfamiliar and different from what we used to know and what we expected to see.

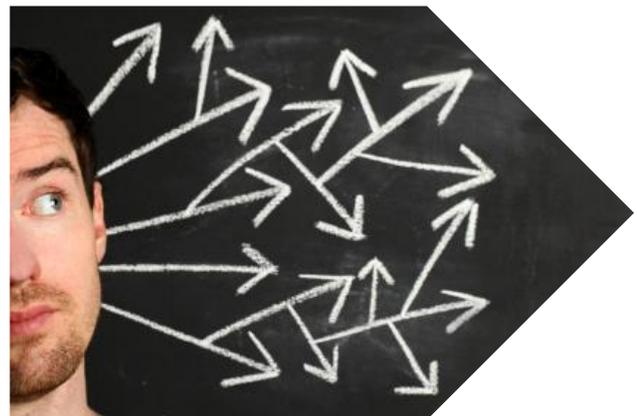
Where is your faith? --Luke 8:25

OBJECTIVES

- Guide congregations to self-reflect in terms of the congregational lifecycle
- Equip them to be proactive about their future
- Walk with them as they discern their next steps
- Equip them for leadership in a time of transition
- Create cohorts of connection across congregations

TIMELINE

- January 2022 launch
- Meets for 18 months, one full day once a quarter



For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not first sit down and estimate the cost, to see whether he has enough to complete it? --Luke 14:28

METHODOLOGY

- Congregations form a team: clergy plus 4-5 lay leaders from the parish
- Hybrid, each congregational team decides whether they will participate in person or virtually
- Rotate hosting for in-person among 4 tech hubs
 - Christ Church Cathedral
 - Trinity Hannibal
 - Christ Church Cape Girardeau
 - Calvary Columbia
- Day-long sessions with homework in between
- Teams go on a discernment retreat at the year mark, after which they meet with the Bishop for consultation and then move toward Requiem or Renaissance
- Program concludes with celebration of this work and all the ministry of these congregations
- Organized and led by Canon for Evangelism & Discipleship Development, with additional facilitation from clergy and lay leaders primarily but not exclusively in the Diocese of Missouri

STRUCTURE

- Introductory Zoom meeting w/Bishop and Canon for Evangelism & Discipleship Development
- Teams set quantitative and qualitative goals
- First 12 Months: Discernment
- Last 6 Months: Requiem Track or Renaissance Track
- First part of the day: Large group meeting with content
- Second part of the day: team meetings to set goals/discuss progress
- 3 months post-program follow-up from Requiem or Renaissance team

Did I not choose you? --John 6:70

TOPICS/CONTENT

- Congregational Discernment
- Lifecycle of a Congregation
- Congregational Snapshot: Data on You
- Defining Requiem and Renaissance
- Missional Community
- Creation of Criteria for a Holy Ending or a Replant
- Spiritual Practices incl. Rule of Life
- Community Listening
- Parallel Development
- Stewardship, incl. Stewardship of Buildings
- Experimental Ministry
- Church Conflict Fire Insurance: Adaptive Leadership in Changing Systems



Requiem Track

- What is a Holy Ending?
- Documenting History
- Tending to Grief and Loss
- Celebrating the Saints of Before
- Searching for Whom to Seed
- Handing Over the Keys

Renaissance Track

- Models for Renaissance
- Evangelism
- Church Planting Principles/Techniques
- Spiritually Rooted Stewardship
- Community Engagement
- Getting Things Off the Ground: Project Management

When I sent you out without a purse, bag, or sandals, did you lack anything? --Luke 22:35

MILESTONES AND METRICS

Quantitative

- 100% participation by parishes on diocesan aid
- All participants complete all parochial documentation on time

Qualitative

- Clear sense of God's call for their future
- Feel supported and connected to the diocesan household
- Tools to live out their discernment
- Renewed sense of energy and possibility
- Deeper connection to faith and faith community
- Deeper engagement with town/city/county

EXPENSES

- Food/Snacks/Hospitality
- Facilitator Stipends/Mileage
- Tech
- Print materials

FUNDING

- Discipleship Development budget
- Registration fees

Is a lamp brought in to be put under the bushel basket, or under the bed, and not on the lamp stand? --Mark 4:21

COMMUNICATIONS

Channels

- iSeek
- Clergy Connections
- Articles and videos

Before

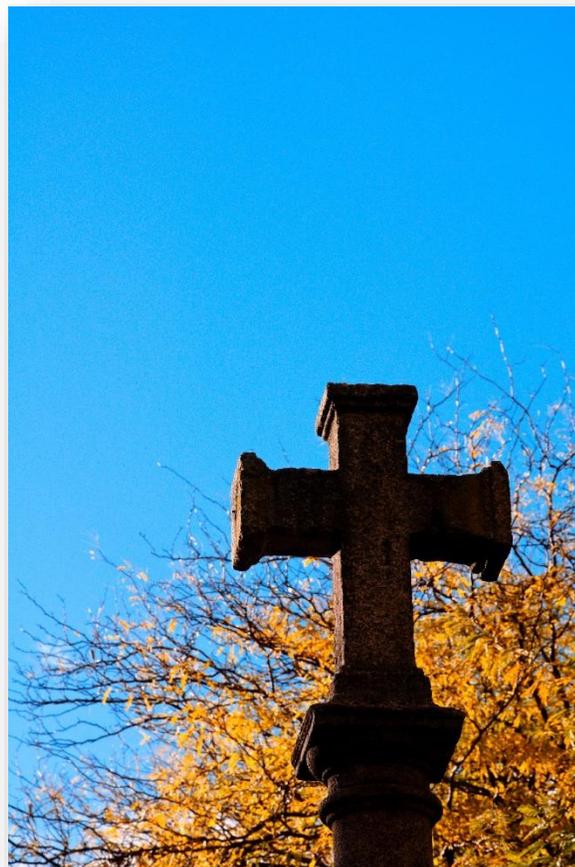
- Invitations to participating congregations
- Project overview to Standing Committee/Diocesan Council/Diocesan Household

During

- Updates to Diocesan Household
- Ongoing instruction and support to participating congregations

After

- Detailed analysis of results to Standing Committee/Diocesan Council
- Report to Diocesan Convention



CONCLUSION

Bishop Deon has articulated his clear sense that he is *not* called to preside over the demise of the Episcopal Church in the eastern half of Missouri. His energy and vision have been matched by the creativity and willingness of the entire diocesan household to innovate, to experiment, to risk. We are willing to follow the Holy Spirit into uncharted territory, accelerated by the pandemic to the point of calling the question on the future of the church in this time and place. Guided by God, collaborating with one another and our neighbors, we seek to answer that question through both Requiem and Renaissance. We will say goodbye to what needs to go to a holy rest while seeding and nurturing new expressions of faith and community among us, knowing that resurrection is rich on both paths.

The work is urgent and the time is now. As St. Paul writes in the Letter to the Romans, "For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God."

Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God? --John 11:40

