



SEEK!

THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF MISSOURI

WINTER 2022

A New Year...



...A New Vision



SEEK!

Cover Photos:

(upper left)

Planting seeds for diverse ministry:
Faith Christian Church of India

(upper right)

Providing meals in our community:
St. Francis Episcopal Church

(lower left)

Engaging in young adult ministry:
Deaconess Anne House

(lower right)

Sharing the Gospel:
The Episcopal Church of the Transfiguration

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

2 Mission & Vision

The Diocese paves a path for our future.

3 The Bishop's Annual Appeal

Turning our vision into reality.

5 Hybrid Church

*Reflecting on the future of technology
in the Diocese.*

9 New Convocations

*Creating new engagement and shared
ministry between our parishes.*

10 Bishop's Medals

*Honoring outstanding service
and ministry.*

11 Meet the Missioners

*Connecting and collaborating for the
work of the Church.*

13 Requiem or Renaissance

*18 parishes begin an intentional
discernment process.*

14 Spring Events

*Mark your calendars for these special
regional opportunities.*

15 The Bishop's Address

*Bishop Deon shares his annual
address to the Diocese.*

Mission

*Walking humbly with God and our neighbors,
we seek justice, act with love,
and live the Good News of Jesus.*

Vision

*A world transformed by
God's love, justice and peace.*

After months of dreaming, researching, discussing and praying, the Diocesan Strategic Visioning Committee has developed new mission and vision statements along with a five-year plan to move our diocese into the future.

The strategic plan has five areas of focus:

- Pastoral Care & Stewardship
- Formation & Worship
- Evangelism & Justice
- Community Building & Structure
- Communication & Technology

The goals and initiatives have an outward focus and address ways to connect with our neighbors and each other throughout the Diocese. The ideas about how to use our resources focus significantly on building relationships with our neighbors, especially those marginalized in the wider community.

All the details of the plan are included in a 43-page report which is available on the diocesan website:

www.diocesemo.org/strategic-visioning

Diocesan Council approved the goals and initiatives at its October 2021 meeting and the plan was presented at the 182nd Diocesan Convention in November.

Our gratitude goes to those who served on the Strategic Visioning Committee, along with everyone throughout the Diocese who engaged in our focus groups and discussions during this process.

The Strategic Visioning Committee:

Katie Ong, consultant
The Rev. Annette Joseph, co-chair
Dick Entenmann, co-chair
The Rev. Deacon Barbi Click
The Rev. Dr. Clive Samson
The Rev. Jon Stratton
Janet Thompson
The Rev. Sally Weaver
Machelle West
Parker Williams



Turning Vision into Reality

God has a plan, a path, and a purpose for The Diocese of Missouri. Bishop Deon Johnson has invited us to catch a glimpse of God's dream, a vision shaped by the Strategic Visioning plan that was created throughout 2021 and presented to the Diocesan Convention in November of 2021. Our vision is shaped by faith and optimism for the future of our diocese as we live more fully into being the Household of God.

Bringing a vision to life takes a lot of prayer, a lot of effort, and often a lot of money. Bishop Deon is now asking us to engage in prayer, make a new effort, and offer financial resources through the 2022 Bishop's Annual Appeal.

This is the first annual appeal in more than 20 years in our diocese. The bishop's goal is to raise at least \$30,000 to help fund three priority initiatives, over and above our annual budget.

The Bishop's Annual Appeal begins on Ash Wednesday and runs through Easter. More information and opportunities to give will be available on the diocesan website and in a special mailing during Lent.

To receive mailings for the Bishop's Annual Appeal, add your name to our diocesan mailing list at:

<https://www.diocesemo.org/diocesan-mailing-lists>

or send your mailing address to

communications@diocesemo.org.

Deacon Chester Hines Racial Reconciliation Fund

Money from this fund will help seed an endowment to finance the work of repairing racial injustice. Members of the 182nd Diocesan Convention passed a resolution to begin the work of repenting for our historic participation in the chattel slavery of people of African descent and the systematic oppression of First Nations peoples.

Young Adult Ministry Fund

This fund will help cement our commitment to our two Young Adult Ministries in the Diocese. Deaconess Anne House in Old North St. Louis is a branch of the Episcopal Service Corps, offering young adults a chance to live, worship, and serve in an intentional community. Rockwell House Episcopal Campus Ministry offers students at Washington University, St. Louis University, and other schools in the area a place to experience faith during their college years.

Bishop's Curacy Leadership Academy

This fund will help seed an endowment to provide salary support, mentorship, leadership training, and vocational formation for new seminary graduates. It is intended to benefit both large and small parishes and draw gifted new priests to the diocese. The program will provide nurturing of priestly vocations at the same time as providing support for parishes needing vibrant clergy leadership.

“I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old ones will dream dreams, your young ones will see visions.”

—Joel 2:28

Dear Siblings in Christ,

God is doing a new thing in The Diocese of Missouri! There are fresh winds blowing in our communities of faith, transforming us towards a fuller expression of God’s vision in this time and place. As a diocese, we are moving and grooving with God to transform our neighbors and communities towards God’s dream of Beloved Community.

We have spent the last year dreaming together about the many ways we can live out the desire of God to reconcile all people in Christ Jesus. We have committed ourselves to work towards “a world transformed by God’s love, justice, and peace.”

As we embark on this new adventure and vision towards a new chapter in the life of The Diocese of Missouri, I am pleased to inaugurate the Bishop’s Annual Appeal to support important aspects of transformational ministry within our diocese. This inaugural year’s theme is “Vision” and invites us to build on the work of the Strategic Vision for the Diocese.



Your financial contribution to the Bishop’s Annual Appeal will support three vital areas of ministry within the Diocese:

- The establishment of the Deacon Chester Hines Racial Reconciliation Fund/Trust.
- The support of the Young Adult Ministries of Rockwell House and Deaconess Ann House.
- The creation of a Curacy Leadership Academy for newly ordained clergy.

Through *Vision: The Bishop’s Annual Appeal*, we have an opportunity to transform the lives of God’s people as we seek to answer Christ’s call to radical and hospitable love. As one church, one vision, one hope lived out in many locations, I give thanks for your support as we move closer towards God’s dream.

Thank you in advance for your financial support and I am tremendously grateful for you and your ministry as we seek to follow Christ Jesus our Savior.

Yours in Christ,

The Rt. Rev. Deon K. Johnson
Bishop of Missouri

The Hybrid Church is Here to Stay

by the Rev. Mike Angell



Hybrid technology at The Episcopal Church of the Holy Communion in University City.

We are now almost two years into the rapid technological acceleration necessitated by the COVID pandemic. Recently Canon Doris invited me to present to the clergy of the diocese about the state of technology in the church. More than featuring some new gadget to buy or program to purchase, I thought it was time to pause for reflection.

For many of us the use of all of this technology has been almost like learning a new language by immersion. I asked my clergy colleagues to send in questions and thoughts ahead of the workshop. We talked through a few ongoing technical frustrations: audio on live streams, how to keep parish newsletters out of parishioners' spam folders. But overall, I thought it was important to look at my clergy colleagues and congratulate them. I want to take a moment in this article to say the same to everyone in the diocese: "well done."

We have become a hybrid church. We are gathering in ways we couldn't have imagined, or would have intentionally avoided in years past. Vestries have gathered regularly on Zoom. We have held two Diocesan Conventions entirely online. Clergy have preached sermons, offered meditation, even prayed

with grieving family members all from afar. Tireless volunteers have stood behind cameras and hunched over laptops with video-editing and streaming software. Octogenarians have figured out how to join a Zoom and to mute and unmute themselves! We have found ways to walk together with God, even when standing together physically wasn't safe.

These two years have been exhausting, but the effort has paid off. Take a moment to notice all the work, all the pushing past frustration. Take a moment to thank your clergy leaders, the fierce administrators, and the intrepid members who have led the way. Take a moment to say thank you. After taking a break to notice all the work, after saying thank you, let's talk about two questions I think we need to start to asking about technology as we imagine our hybrid future:

Question 1: How does your Online Presence reflect your Mission?

At Holy Communion we have named our Mission with three values. We say we are 1) Diverse and 2) Welcoming 3) Community seeking to walk the way of Jesus and to reveal Christ's reconciling love in

our city, nation, and world. How do we reflect that mission online?

Throughout the pandemic, we have tried to make sure that our online presence represents the broad diversity of the parish. We have made sure camera footage features diverse faces that can be seen well. We have co-sponsored an online training with the Metro Trans Umbrella group called "Trans 101." We tried to use technology in ways that show what we value.

Some of this required fancy technology, but not all of it. Before he left for Colorado, the Rev. Marc Smith recorded a Zoom about "the slave Bible," looking at the ugly history of an 1807 document used in the formation of Black people enslaved by British colonists in the West Indies and the United States. To record the forum Marc simply used his laptop on Zoom and shared a Powerpoint. Marc's forum now has been viewed more than 1,000 times on Youtube. It doesn't have to be complicated, in fact sometimes technology works better when it is less complicated. What we have to say matters more than how we say it.

In the early months of the pandemic, it became evident that our newfound online life was a way to welcome others. I've heard stories from around the diocese, from Clayton to Rolla to Poplar Bluff, of people choosing to be confirmed or received by the bishop, before they ever set foot inside one of our buildings. As we grow toward a hybrid future, we need to ask: how are we using our online pres-

ence intentionally to welcome others into our life in Christ? My colleague Annette Joseph talks about how "Welcome Videos" for her parishes do this work intentionally (see page 8).

When Holy Communion talks about our value of community, we mean two things. We talk about the community that gathers as the church, and we talk about the "community beyond our walls." We used technology to connect with both in new ways. Early in the pandemic, we revived some old technology: the phone tree. We checked in on members regularly, identified needs, asked for prayer requests. We also found ways to support our neighbors. When vaccine appointments were hard to schedule (remember those days?), we connected technology averse seniors with younger members over the phone and made sure our vulnerable neighbors had access to vaccines. Just because technology like the telephone isn't new to us, it doesn't make it a less valid way of adapting our ministry.

Question 2: How are we evaluating our online presence?

You will notice, I have said very little about streaming services in the paragraphs above. I know that producing a livestream of our services from our buildings has become a major priority for many of us, and I wonder in the months ahead whether it will continue to merit so much of our attention. I worry that too many of us are evaluating our online services by comparing them to the National Cathedral or Trinity Wall Street. The budget at each of those



Local college students help with technology at Christ Episcopal Church in Rolla.

churches just for live-streaming is bigger than the whole budget of many of our parishes. It costs big money to make a livestream look that clean and simple. So if we aren't going to spend millions on camera and staff, how do we adapt?

Many businesses and colleges are adopting a rule that if more than a handful of people will be joining a meeting via Zoom, the whole group should be on Zoom. These rules reflect how difficult it is to offer a truly "hybrid" space where in-person and online participants have a similar experience. If you are at a stress point, trying to make both in person and online work well, maybe consider them separately.

My colleague Annette Joseph has written about ways the church in Cape Girardeau has used Zoom to connect for Bible Studies and book discussions (see page 8). At this point in the pandemic, I think we are learning what works well online, and what doesn't.

As our bishop reminded us early in the pandemic, you simply can't have Eucharist through a computer screen. Sacramentally it just doesn't work. Historically, our 8 a.m. services in the Episcopal Church started mostly because clergy wanted to introduce the weekly celebration of Eucharist in parishes where parishioners mostly wanted to say Morning Prayer. I wonder if we are about to see the opposite happen. I can see a future where parishes offer two weekly services: one Eucharist in person, with maybe just the audio of the sermon recorded for a simple podcast. The other service could be a simple weekly Zoom service of morning or evening prayer, the officiant, readers, ushers, and each participant or household at their own devices, allowing parishioners see one another's faces and interact even if they are distanced.

Two services, one in person and one on Zoom, would be a smart simple use of technology, and it is one potential way forward as a hybrid church. I am not sure it is the best way for every one of our churches. I am sure of one thing. I am grateful for all the work you have done. I am honestly impressed by the ways our churches and leaders have stretched themselves. I am thankful for the ways you have chosen to show up and witness to Christ's love, even as you've learned this new language of technology. Your witness shows the depth of your commitment that the Good News of God in Christ might be preached to the ends of the earth.



Hybrid church is a team effort at Trinity Episcopal Church in Kirksville.



Christ Church Cathedral in St. Louis has a rotation of volunteer teams to produce their hybrid services.



Tech crews enhance services at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Carondelet/St. Louis with recorded audio and video presentations.

About the author:

The Rev. Mike Angell is the rector of the Episcopal Church of the Holy Communion in University City and the author of "How Can I Live Peacefully with Justice?" available from Church Publishing.

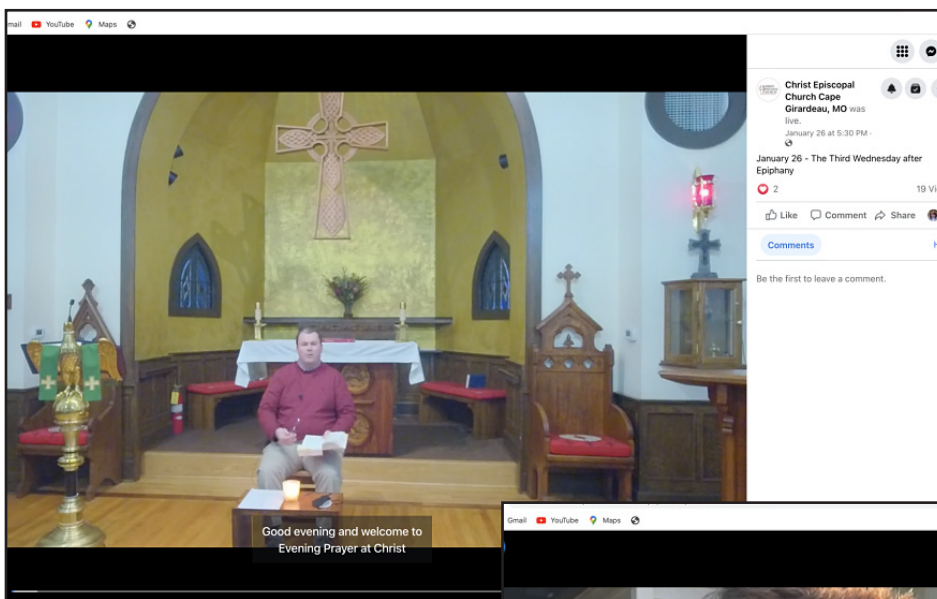
Engaging in Different Streams

by the Rev. Annette Joseph

Rural Missioner for Christ Episcopal Church, Cape Girardeau and St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Sikeston

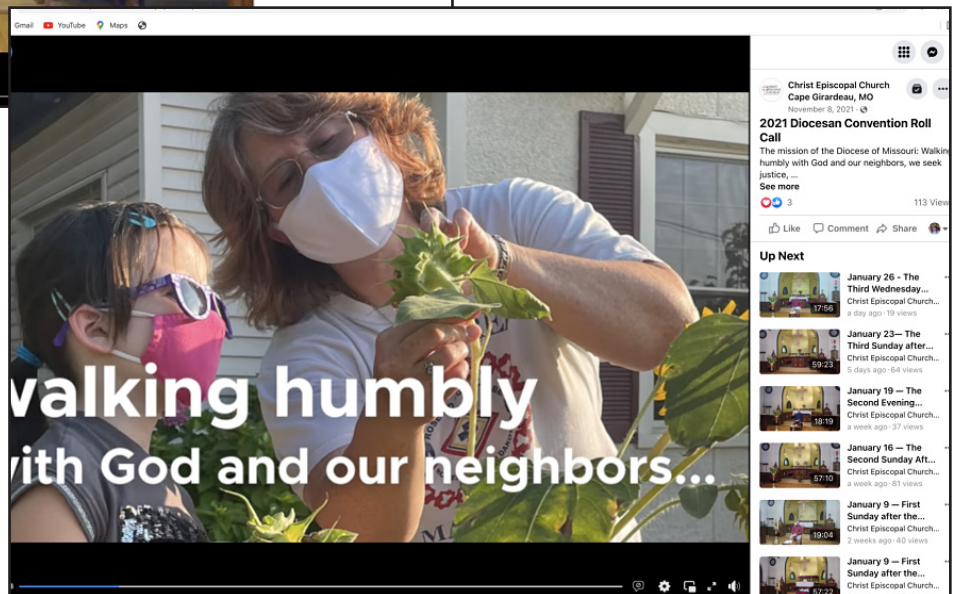
We tend to think streaming our services is the only way we can engage people outside our doors. At Christ Church Cape we have done a few different kinds of streaming. One platform has been our group studies. There was a series of these done and then uploaded to our Facebook page or put right directly onto our page. These included a study on Paul's Letter to the Romans led by Joshua Smith; Accidental Saints based on Nadia Bolz Weber's book; and The Gospel According to Mark. These have reached over 65 people and allowed us to travel further than just in our own neighborhood. It also gets others looking at who we are as a church and what we are about in our mission and understanding of others.

Another successful platform has been in our welcome videos we did for convention. Our first one was based on our mission statement, this got over 600 views because of the statement. "We are a community forgiven and loved by God, joyfully called to the work of reconciliation." This was recorded by different members and then spliced together with music. The last one was based on the diocesan mission statement and has received over 100 views. It is another one done with pictures showing us in action as a church serving our neighbors and then a video of our church members saying who and where we are. These do more to invite people into what we are doing outside the church instead of what we do together on a Sunday morning. I think this is important as we engage the church of the future. We just need to find the places which define who we are as the church in our community and get this good news out there to others.



(above) Christ Episcopal Church in Cape Girardeau offers prayer services and Bible studies on their Facebook page.

(right) Christ Episcopal Church in Cape Girardeau used the welcome video they produced for diocesan convention as a way to engage additional people on Facebook.



New Convocations: One Church; Many Locations

The Diocese of Missouri is reorganizing our convocation structure this year with the goal of creating new engagement and shared ministry between our parishes.

"As a Diocese, we are called into an intentional time of discerning God's call for our communities of faith that is rooted in the notion that we are one Church, the Body of Christ, in many locations," said Bishop Deon Johnson. "This requires that we must pivot from communities of faith ministering solo or in silos. We must be about mission together; collaboration and intentionality are the watchwords for our path forward."

As of January 1, 2022, we have four convocations instead of six. Each convocation is named after a prominent figure in our diocesan history:

- **Bishop Jackson Kemper:** missionary bishop and founder of the Diocese;
- **The Rev. Deacon Jane Dey:** the first female deacon in the Diocese;
- **The Rev. Emery Washington,** social justice priest and statesman of the Diocese;
- **Elizabeth Dyer,** the first woman elected to General Convention in the Episcopal Church.

Each convocation is meeting in February and will elect a Dean from the clergy order and a Warden from the laity to serve as leaders. Each will also elect representatives to serve on Diocesan Council as well as two people (one clergy and one laity) to serve on the new Diocesan Mission & Ministry Council, which will work on the implementation of our new strategic vision.

The convocations are tasked, based on missional context, to develop a regional strategy for the communities of faith that make up each group. Each convocation will meet at least four times each year and will plan leadership and social activities within the Diocese.

The convocation meetings and events are open to everyone -- we hope you'll get involved!

Diocese of Missouri Convocations

JANE DEY CONVOCATION:

- Calvary, Columbia
- Christ Church, Rolla
- Deaconess Anne House, St. Louis
- Grace, Jefferson City
- Rockwell House, St. Louis
- St. Alban's, Fulton
- St. Mark's, Portland
- Trinity, Kirksville
- St. Matthew's, Mexico

ELIZABETH DYER CONVOCATION:

- All Saints, Farmington
- Christ Church, Cape Girardeau
- Holy Cross, Poplar Bluff
- St. John and St. James, Sullivan
- St. Paul's, Ironton
- St. Paul's, Sikeston
- Trinity, De Soto
- Trinity, St. James
- St. Vincent's in the Vineyard, Ste. Genevieve

EMERY WASHINGTON CONVOCATION:

- Advent, Crestwood
- All Saints & Ascension, Northwood
- Christ Church Cathedral, St. Louis
- Emmanuel, Webster Groves
- Grace, Kirkwood
- Holy Communion, University City
- St. Barnabas, Florissant
- St. John's, Tower Grove/St. Louis
- St. Mark's, St. Louis
- St. Michael and St. George, Clayton
- St. Paul's, Carondelet/St. Louis
- St. Peter's, Ladue
- St. Stephen's, Ferguson
- St. Thomas, Crestwood
- Trinity, Central West End/St. Louis

JACKSON KEMPER CONVOCATION:

- Calvary, Louisiana
- Faith Church of India, Ballwin
- Good Shepherd, Town & Country
- St. Francis, Eureka
- St. John's, Eolia
- St. Luke's, Manchester
- St. Martin's, Ellisville
- St. Timothy's, Creve Coeur
- Transfiguration, Lake St. Louis
- Trinity, Hannibal
- Trinity, St. Charles



Bishop's Medals

The Rt. Rev. Deon Johnson revived a tradition in The Diocese of Missouri by presenting Bishop's Medals during the 2021 Diocesan Convention. The honors were given during the convention worship service, November 18, 2021, at Christ Church Cathedral in St. Louis to recognize individuals and groups for their outstanding leadership and service in their parishes and the Diocese.

Recipients of the 2021 Bishop's Awards:

- **Robert Buckley** - Sexton at Christ Church Cathedral for 30+ years
- **The Rev. Dr. Warren Crews** - Founder of The Episcopal School for Ministry
- **Donna Erickson** - Pastoral Servant Leader; member of Emmanuel Episcopal Church in Webster Groves
- **Tom Hedrick** - Served as Diocesan Treasurer for 11 years (not pictured above)
- **The Rev. Chester Hines** - Chair of the Diocesan Commission on Dismantling Racism for 40+ years
- **Canon Precentor Pat Partridge** - Organist and Choirmaster at Christ Church Cathedral for 40+ years
- **Susan Rehkopf** - Longtime Diocesan Historian & Archivist
- **The Rev. Canon Doris Westfall** - Canon to the Ordinary; Christian leadership
- **The Congregation of St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Portland** - Ministry leadership in rural Missouri community

Meet Our New Missioners

Our Strategic Visioning has invited us to live more intentionally into a collaborative model of ministry as we move with God into the future.

To build networks and bridges across the Diocese, Bishop Deon Johnson has appointed missioners from throughout the Diocese to enable us to better connect and collaborate.



Missioner for Creation Care and Stewardship:

Parker Williams

Holy Cross Episcopal Church, Poplar Bluff

The Missioner for Creation Care & Stewardship is tasked with mobilizing a wave of religious activism within and beyond the Diocese to protect and heal God's Creation. The Missioner is to invite us as a diocesan household to recapture our original mandate as stewards of creation.



Missioner for Hispanic/Latino Ministry Engagement:

The Rev. Dr. Valori Mulvey Sherer

Emmanuel Episcopal Church, Webster Groves

The Missioner for Hispanic/Latino ministry is responsible for advocacy and for oversight of Hispanic/Latino ministry in the Diocese. The primary role of the Missioner is to work with the Diocese to promote, encourage, create, enhance, and develop opportunities for ministry among people of Hispanic and Latino cultural backgrounds.



Missioner for Indigenous Ministry Engagement:

The Rev. Leslie Scoopmire

St. Martin's Episcopal Church, Ellisville

The Episcopal Diocese of Missouri, like much of the Episcopal Church, was built on the ancestral lands of Indigenous/First Nations people. As a step towards seeking acknowledgement and repentance, the Missioner for Indigenous Ministry Engagement is to assist the Diocese as we seek to intentionally remember, recognize and reconcile the harmful past while forging new relationships in connection with our Indigenous siblings.

Missioner for Jubilee Ministries:

The Rev. Dn. Barbi Click
St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Carondelet / St. Louis

The Missioner for Jubilee Ministry seeks to be a convener of our mission to stand with those who live at the margins. This is a social justice ministry of advocacy and service for the poor, oppressed, and marginalized within the Diocese of Missouri. This is a ministry to encourage and empower communities of faith within the Diocese to advocate and act towards meeting the basic human needs of those on the margins. The Missioner will serve along side the Hunger Task Force of the Diocese.



Missioner for LGBTQIA+ Engagement

Bren O'Connor
Christ Church Cathedral, St. Louis

Our faith in following Jesus is about being committed to living the way of God's unconditional, unselfish, sacrificial, redemptive, and transformational love. While The Episcopal Church has long embraced the gifts of the LGBTQIA+ community, Christianity as a whole has caused hurt and harm. The Missioner for LGBTQIA+ Engagement is tasked with reaching out beyond the Diocese to represent the Bishop and Diocese of Missouri at gatherings to promote the full inclusion of LGBTQIA+ person while being an advocate within the Diocese to further dismantle barriers to the full expression of the ministry of the church.



Missioner for Racial Reconciliation and Justice:

The Rev. Shug Goodlow
St. Martin's Episcopal Church, Ellisville

Racial Reconciliation and Justice is a social justice and equity ministry of advocacy and service toward reconciling all people to God and one another. This is a ministry to promote and publicize the work of racial reconciliation and to offer opportunities for individuals and communities of faith to engage in the necessary work of acknowledging, naming, engaging, and dismantling systems of oppression born of chattel slavery within the Diocese of Missouri. The Missioner will serve as a part of the newly constituted Leadership Team of the Dismantling Racism Commission.



Missioner for Rural Communities:

The Rev. Annette Joseph
Christ Episcopal Church, Cape Girardeau
and St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Sikeston

The Diocese of Missouri has many congregations in rural communities who have a history of feeling left out or less important than our urban parishes. The Missioner for Rural Communities will help create connections for those congregations and lift up their ministries. She will also help introduce new opportunities for our rural communities to grow in faith, regardless of the size of the congregation.



Requiem or Renaissance: Engaging the Diocese

by the Rev. Canon Whitney Rice

Our diocesan program *Requiem or Renaissance* begins this winter, with 18 brave and faithful congregations discerning and building their next steps as communities of faith.

What is Requiem or Renaissance?

Requiem or Renaissance is an 18-month discernment and skills-building program for all congregations receiving diocesan financial aid or otherwise in need of revitalization.

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.

But what if you're not a member of one of those congregations? What does Requiem or Renaissance have to do with you?

Quite a bit. As Bishop Deon is fond of saying, we are one church in many locations. The Diocese of Missouri is One household of faith that lives, works, and serves in multiple places across the eastern half of our state. What affects one congregation affects all. As St. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12, "The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you', nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you.'... If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it."

So first of all, our *Requiem or Renaissance* congregations need you. They need your faithful support in prayer. They need your stories of both successes and failures in your own congregation. When did you try a bold new venture in ministry and it turned out great? When did it not turn out so great, but the learning that the risk produced was well worth it? How have you developed your sense of common giftedness and shared vocation? Why do you believe in your church? How do you discern God's call to you?



REQUIEM
or
RENAISSANCE

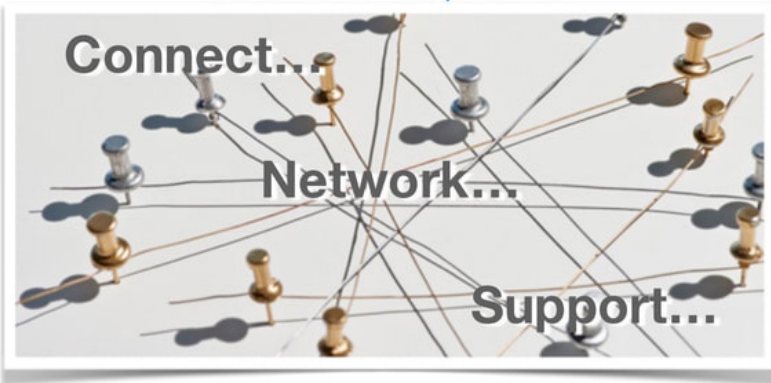
But it's important to emphasize that this is a two-way street. You need the *Requiem or Renaissance* congregations as much as they need you. First of all, these congregations have been living the future of the church — the recognition of the uniquely paralyzing intersection of privilege and decline. They are out on the frontier of how the church is being called to adapt, and they are the pathfinders for adaptation and innovation among us. We will look to them to teach us the pitfalls and plusses of the road ahead.

So make *Requiem or Renaissance* a regular part of your prayer life and the work of your own congregation. Seek out opportunities to ask the participants what they're learning, and offer the gifts of your own journeys of discernment. As St. Paul again reminds us, "Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many." May the Body flourish richly across our diocese, through this work and all our common efforts.

PROVINCE V OF THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

BIG PROVINCIAL GATHERING

SOUTH BEND, INDIANA
APRIL 29-30, 2022



Keynote Speaker:
Gay Clark Jennings
(President, House of Deputies)



"The Big Provincial Gathering is a model for church leaders and a shining example of how to create robust, collaborative tools and networks for our church."

**ALL LAITY AND CLERGY
ARE WELCOME!**

Registration opens Jan 1: \$50/person
Registration after Mar 1: \$75/person

Pre-Event Trainings:
Thursday, April 28

BPG begins:
Friday, April 29, 2022 @ 12pm EDT

Sending out:
Saturday, April 30, 2022 @ 1pm EDT

**St. Michael & All Angels
South Bend IN 46635**

Event Information:

provincevcoordinator@gmail.com

989-413-3229

www.provincev.org

The Episcopal Church is made up of nine provinces in the United States and Latin America, with each province made up of several dioceses. The Diocese of Missouri is a member of Province V, which is planning its annual Big Provincial Gathering April 29-30, 2022, in South Bend, Indiana.

The event is open to everyone and will offer workshops on many topics, including Dismantling Racism, Creation Care, Public Theology, Migration Ministries, and more. Gay Clark Jennings, House of Bishops President, will be the keynote speaker.

The Diocese of Missouri will be represented by Michael Booker (St. Francis, Eureka), Betty Bowersox (Grace, Kirkwood), and the Rev. Shug Goodlow (St. Martin's, Ellisville) in the Provincial House of Deputies. Bishop Deon Johnson is a member of the Provincial House of Bishops. Adrienne Dillon (All Saints & Ascension, Northwoods/St. Louis) serves as the secretary for the Province.

Get details and register at <https://www.provincev.org/>

Seek!

Province V: Connect. Network. Support.

Province V provides resources and connections to fulfill or expand our ministries. Along with the annual Big Provincial Gathering, Province V offers the following resources:

Networks:

Networks exist to connect and encourage each other while sharing resources that are helpful to people in their local contexts. All networks gladly welcome anyone who is doing similar work or is interested in beginning work in that ministry area.

Leadership Coaching Project (LCP):

The goal of the Leadership Coaching Project is to provide each leader a coach who will walk with them as they explore new opportunities and will work to engage communities in ministry. Coaches are available to individuals (lay, deacon, priest, bishop) who are exploring a new area or need some accountability, or to teams of people (vestries, committees, commissions) working on a particular project or goal. Rural Area leaders are eligible for special discounts in coaching costs.



From the Desk of the Bishop

The Rt. Rev. Deon K. Johnson shares his annual address to the Diocese

Peter replied to Jesus, "Look, we have left everything and followed you. What then will we have?" Jesus said to his disciples, "Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man is seated on the throne of his glory, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold, and will inherit eternal life."

Matthew 19:27-29

I want to begin by telling you a Church story. There is a wonderful story of two ushers who served the 8 a.m. service in their local parish church. Every Sunday, barring a few, they were present and faithful to their calling as ushers. For over 30 years, these two ushers greeted the faithful as they arrived and wished them well as they departed. They were inseparable on a Sunday morning. But they couldn't stand each other! They had been friends, but at some point along the way they fell out. No one knew why, they just know that it had been over 20 years since the two spoke to each other.

None the less, the time came when one of the ushers died. The community gathered for the funeral only to find out that the remaining usher paid for the reception afterwards. The usher threw an extravagant party after the funeral. The priest of the parish was a little puzzled by all this and decided to ask why the surviving usher would go to the expense for someone he couldn't stand. So she pulls him aside and asked, "Why go through all this for someone you haven't spoken to in over 20 years?" The usher replied, "I've been in this church for most of my life and I've heard more than a few sermons and I've read the bible a couple of times. I could not stand him. Did not like him one bit, but I loved him. And love will make you do things that like never could."

Love will make you do things that like never could.

We find Jesus in this Gospel responding to Peter. I have to confess that I love Peter. Peter is my absolute favorite follower of Jesus. Peter suffers from a debilitating condition called F.I.M.S. -- foot-in-mouth syndrome -- and most of the time our rock-headed friend just does not get it. Earlier in the Gospel, Jesus had just encountered a rich young man who

thought that he could buy his way into eternal life, that his stuff would save him. Jesus quickly dissuaded him of that notion, reminding him that, "it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God."

I am certain that Jesus loved Peter, but I am not sure Jesus always liked him. Peter pulls Jesus aside after hearing all this and asks, "What then will we have? What's in it for me? What's the great reward for following you, Jesus? We gave up everything; families, fisher-friends, livelihoods, 401k's, family vacations. We gave it all up to follow you. And now you're saying it is impossible to be saved? What gives?"

Peter articulates the fears and the concerns of the disciples to Jesus. They knew what had come before them. They knew the stories of the hardship of the people of Israel. They knew the challenges that faced them in their own day; Roman occupation, brutality, division. They did not have the slightest clue what would come next.

Jesus says to Peter and the disciples, "Do not worry, you have given up a lot, but you will gain even more than you could imagine. The things you had in the past will be nothing like compared to your future."

What comes next?

I think Jesus speaks not only to Peter and to the first disciples but he speaks to us in our own day. Over the past 20 months we have been echoing Peter's words in one form or another in asking, "What comes next? Where do we go from here?" We have seen transformation and change happen in the Church at a pace that none of us could have ever imagined.

The questions the Gospel demands of us is can we walk in love, can we live in love, can we be in love with the good news of following Jesus? Yes, we can. Are we in love with God enough to speak and hear hard truths? Yes we are. Are we in love enough to do the hard work transforming a Church to look and love more like Jesus? Yes, we can! Because deep in our hearts we know that love will always make us do things that like never could.

We as a Church and as the Diocese face many challenges. This time of pandemic has been hard on so many levels. We are tired, we are weary, we are worn. We worry about our buildings and the cost of repairs. We stress about our worship attendance and the financial health of our communities. We live and move and have our being in a polarized and divided nation and the drum beat of disunity seems to grow louder each day. We like Peter have asked, "what's next?" We have left our buildings and parish halls and places of comfort in order to love our neighbors. We have worn facemasks and gotten vaccines and booster shots. We have learned to live stream, and Zoom and new ways of being. Now what?

Yet through all of this, we have borne witness to the wonder working power of God to bring new life in the midst of death. What our faith calls us to is not to avoid the hard places in this life, but to cast our care on a loving God who is in the business of resurrection. We may be tired but we must be courageous in living into the resurrected life that is before us. We know deep down in our bones that in order for resurrection to happen somethings must die.

For new life to happen, the old way of being and doing must come to an end.

The problem in the church is that we have believed the lie that our best days are behind us and not ahead. We can too easily fall for the falsehood that we cannot make a difference in the world and that God's work is done. We sometimes fall prey to the temptation of relegating Jesus to about an hour each week which makes no great demand on our lives. Well I am here to tell you that God is not done with us yet!

Over the last 20 months in pandemic, we have worshiped in parking lots and in parks, under shelters

Seek!

and open skies. We have preached to cars and to canines. We have discovered new ways of being and doing church that we could not have imagined in the past. We have shared the good news of Jesus Christ in places that were known and places that were unknown, online and in person, in all sorts of communities and neighborhoods across the eastern part of Missouri. We have done the all the things, even when we had no clue where we were going, what we were doing, or how we would get there. We have rediscovered what it means to be a resilient, responsive, and receptive diocese. God is doing a new thing.



The Rt. Rev. Deon K. Johnson

I am here to declare to you that we are more than our average Sunday attendance! We are more than our buildings. We are more than our parochial reports! We are more than our budgets and balance sheets. I am not worried about our attendance, our parochial report or balance sheets. These things will not make us relevant; these things cannot save us, because Jesus has already done that.

Jesus says to Peter, the disciples, and to us that we need to be faithful to our call to follow Jesus!

We are communities of faith that are loving, liberating, life-giving, and Christ longing! We reflect the hope of a future we cannot see! Our communities of faith across this diocese are places where the good news is present, places where hurting people can be made whole, where the lost can be found, where those on the margins can be brought to the center, and those who are looking for a loving God can find hope in each and every single one of us.

That my sisters and brothers, my siblings in Christ, is where God's longing for us and our longing for God meet. We must be about the business of being prophets of hope, we must be about the business of being bearers of peace, you and I must be about the business of transforming the world towards justice, and we must be about the business of being humble and walking with God.

Love will always make you do things that like never could. We have seen and shown the love of God in Christ Jesus in countless ways this past year.

We have seen small rural congregations like

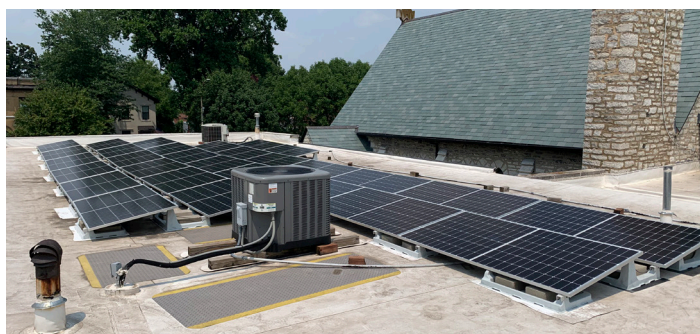


Trinity, Kirksville (*photo, right*) and Trinity, DeSoto become places of hope and holy hospitality, welcoming everyone in need of God's unfenced love, especially our LGBTQIA+ siblings.

We have engaged in the hard work of racial reconciliation, of speaking truth to power, and seeking justice in the re-investment in neglected neighborhoods in the City of St. Louis in congregations like St. Peter's, Ladue; St. Michael & St. George, Clayton; and St. Timothy's, Creve Coeur.

We have fed Christ in the many blessing boxes and good news gardens in places like Trinity, St. Charles; St. Martin's, Ellisville; and St. Paul's, Ironton.

We have cared for the environment and sought to be stewards of creation in everything from solar panels at St. Paul's, Carondelet (*photo, below*), to participating in the U.N. Conference of the Parties (COP26) from Holy Cross, Poplar Bluff.



We have discovered new paths, renewed purpose, new ways of reaching out to our neighbors in communities like All Saints & Ascension, St. Louis; and Faith Christian Church of India, in Ballwin.

We have planted seeds to birth new communities of faith at Christ Church Cathedral, St. Louis; and Holy Communion, University City. We have stepped up in so many ways to be the Church for such a time as this.

By the grace of God, we are becoming more and more the church that has rediscovered what it means to be missional in order to manifest God's dream in this time and place. We have accomplished all of this and so much more in the midst of a global pandemic no less.

In the words of the great philosophers and theologians McFadden & Whitehead, "Ain't no stoppin' us now; we're on the move. Ain't no stoppin' us now; we've got the groove."



We are moving and grooving with a God who is doing a new thing, who is casting a new vision, who is remaking us as Christ-shaped people who know that the best is before us.

Imagine what we will do when we are not in a pandemic.

Imagine what we will accomplish when we partner with God in transforming our communities, our neighborhoods, our towns, and cities.

Imagine what we will do when we continue to pray together and protest together and gather to make the gospel new.

Imagine what it would look like for us to throw off the fetters of how we have been and find freedom in Christ.

Imagine if we decided to not worry about our attendance, or our buildings, or our budget and we got on with the business of telling the Good News of Jesus.

Imagine breaking free from how we have always done things and to dare to envision a church that is focused on the life-giving essentials of prayer, community, worship and ministry to and with our neighbors. (*photo, below: North County Community Garden*)



Friends in Christ, love will always make us do things that like never could and it is time for this church to rise up in deeper love. To rise up to the challenges for such a time as this. To rise up to the work of justice. To rise up to the work of love. To rise up for speaking for the poor and the outcast and the forgotten, the left behind and the lost.

It is time for this church to stop talking about the gospel and be about living the Gospel.

*Rise up, O saints of God!
From vain ambitions turn;
Christ rose triumphant that your hearts
with nobler zeal might burn.*

Goodness rises up. Hope rises up. Love rises up. Goodness rises up even in the midst of pandemic. Hope rises up even in the face of hate and injustice and despair. Love rises up when everything around us says to stand down. We rise up when we act in love without counting the cost.

Something new is about to be born in this diocese and in this Church. New life is not found in the rear-view mirror or in the glories of the past. New life is found when we are bold enough to get out of God's way and be faithful to our call.

This has been a diocese on the move in many ways. From the time of our founding to this time of pandemic, we have been faithful to our call to be a people about hope, faith, justice, reconciliation, and love. I have fallen in love with you and I could not be more proud to have been called to be your bishop and companion along this journey.

We stand looking towards a future bolstered by the payers and hopes and longings of the generations that have gone before.

What possibilities lie ahead of us? What new bridges do we need to cross? What new thresholds do we need to encounter? We must choose to step in to the light of resurrection. We must choose to step into the dream of God. We must choose this day whom we will follow and whom we will serve.

*Speak out, O saints of God!
Despair engulfs earth's frame;
as heirs of God's baptismal grace,
the word of hope proclaim.*

Seek!

As followers of Jesus Christ we can no longer be comfortable with simply being, we must be Christians doing!

We can no longer be content with simply showing up at our places of worship on Sunday and making no difference in our communities on Monday. We must be a church that is on the move, that is nimble, that is responsive to the needs and concerns of our neighbors, no matter who those neighbors might be.

We must loudly and boldly become a church that advocates for the poor, that stands with the oppressed, out on the front lines rather than on the sidelines. We must be about mission and not maintenance; we must in a word be a transformed church because our world needs a transformed church for such a time as this.



Christmas Eve 2021 at St. Vincent Home for Children.

The road ahead will not be easy, it will not be smooth or without peril, but it leads to the heart of God. Peter knew this. Our spiritual ancestors knew this.

The path ahead takes us into an unknown future, but we travel it together. We will not turn back, we will love one another, we will support one another, we will learn from our faults, failings, and failures, but we will keep our eyes on the prize. We will be witnesses to the power of God to heal and make whole.

*Commit your hearts to seek
the paths which Christ has trod,
and, quickened by the Spirit's power,
rise up, O saints of God!*



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