

# Rethinking, Reframing and Reclaiming Our Identity, Purpose and Mission

A Report of the Bishop's Commission on Mission Strategy  
and Diocesan Council  
to the Episcopal Diocese of Minnesota



Convention

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# Table of Contents

<b>Foreword</b>	page 1
Naming Our Current Realities	page 1
Identity and Purpose	page 3
Guiding Principles	page 5
<b>The Recommendations - Summary</b>	page 6
Introduction to the Plan	page 7
<b>The Recommendations in Detail with Mission and Ministry Initiatives</b>	page 8
<b>Goal 1: Spiritual Transformation and Fuller Participation in God’s Mission</b>	page 8
Initiative 1: Spiritual Transformation	page 9
<b>Goal 2: Renew Congregations in Context</b>	page 10
Initiative 2: Engage Congregational Contexts	page 11
Initiative 3: Children, Youth, and Family Ministry	page 12
Initiative 4: Multi-Cultural Ministries	page 12
Initiative 5: Creative Ministry Models	page 13
<b>Goal 3: Recreate the Diocese as a Network</b>	page 14
Initiative 6: Develop Network Infrastructure:	page 15
Initiative 7: Empower, Engage, Inspire Lay Disciples	page 16
Initiative 8: Re-Envision Clergy Leadership	page 16
Initiative 9: Select Bishop and Diocesan Staff Capable of and Committed to Leading Plan to Fruition	page 17
Initiative 10: Aligned, Integrated and Supportive Organization and Structure	page 18
<b>Goal 4: Develop Effective Stewardship of Financial Resources</b>	page 19
Initiative 11: Effective Stewardship of financial resources	page 20
Initiative 12: Effective stewardship and utilization of facilities and land	page 21
<b>Accomplishing the Work Ahead</b>	page 22
<b>Appendix A</b>	
The Bishop’s Commission on Mission Strategy (BCMS) Process	page 23
BCMS Participants	page 28

## Foreword

These joint recommendations of the Bishop's Commission on Mission Strategy and the Diocesan Council are built upon: A) a naming of our current realities; and B) statements of identity and purpose that emerged from our conversations around the diocese.

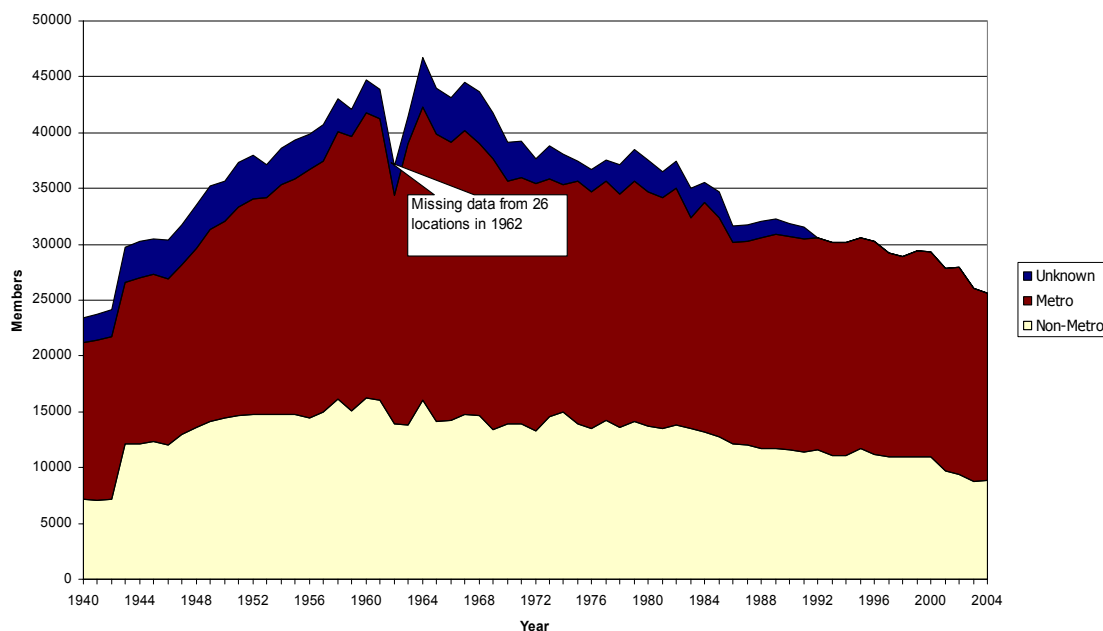
### A) Naming Our Current Realities

#### The Episcopal Diocese of Minnesota has been in numerical decline for forty years.

- ❖ Like the Episcopal Church as a whole, the Diocese of Minnesota peaked in baptized membership in the mid-1960s. Between 1964 and 2004, the diocese lost 40% of its baptized membership.
- ❖ Over the past forty years there has been a 55% decline in the number of yearly baptisms.
- ❖ Confirmations are down over 85% from their peak in the mid 1960s.

“Exploding our assumptions, unsettling our confidence, tarnishing our pride and challenging our hope.”

—Bishop James Jelinek



*Baptized Members in the Diocese of MN 1940-2004*

- ❖ Over the past decade, there has been modest growth in the overall pledge income in the diocese, but when adjusted for inflation, the trend is only slightly more than flat. However, the number of persons pledging continues to decrease. The fact that fewer people are giving more money represents an unsustainable and troubling trend.
- ❖ The Episcopal Church has lost ground relative to other denominations in Minnesota. These include the Roman Catholic and Lutheran churches, which have similar worship styles to ours and have managed to plant new churches and grow while most of our attempts to plant churches have failed.
- ❖ The number of Episcopal congregations in Minnesota has dwindled by 20% over the past 40 years. Currently, numerous congregations stand at the brink of reclassification or closure around the diocese.

- ❖ Our leadership is aging, as represented by the nearly 800 leaders who participated in the 2006 BCMS Mission Survey. Over 70% of respondents were age 50 or above.

**Over the past forty years, the population of Minnesota has grown in size and changed in composition.**

- ❖ From 1970 to 2000, the overall state population grew by 22%, from 3.8 million to 4.9 million. Some areas in Greater Minnesota have diminished in population. However, demographic projections indicate continued rapid growth overall, especially in the Twin Cities metro and the Brainerd corridor. In many of these locations of rapid growth, particularly around the metro, there are few or no Episcopal congregations.
- ❖ The ethnic makeup of Minnesota is rapidly changing. Minnesota's non-white population increased from 69,000 in 1970 (1.8% of the total population) to 519,000 in 2000 (over 10%). Minnesota has become a major immigration hub.
- ❖ The number and proportion of religiously-unaffiliated persons in Minnesota has grown over the past forty years to nearly 40% in 2000. The idea that Minnesota is a fully "churched" state is far from the truth.

**Previous efforts to address this systemic decline have failed. We stand at a critical juncture in our history.**

- ❖ In 2005, the Bishop's Commission on Metro Mission Strategy conducted an extensive study of the Episcopal Church's position in the Twin Cities area, compiling a database of membership trends for the whole diocese, reviewing archives of past efforts, analyzing best practices from other denominations and looking at population trends and statistics. The Commission concluded that the challenges facing the Episcopal Church in the metro were deeply linked to underlying, system-wide issues that must be addressed before a new strategy could succeed.
- ❖ As a diocese, we have tried a succession of strategic and mission planning initiatives during the past forty years. The history of these efforts is largely a tale of aborted processes, missed goals, unmet expectations, and in many cases inadequate follow-through, accountability and evaluation.
- ❖ We have developed a culture of critique, complaint, and skepticism within the diocese that impairs our ability to cooperate fruitfully in mission and ministry.
- ❖ Our current patterns are unsustainable. The challenges facing us are deep, systemic, and complex, requiring a response that grapples seriously with fundamental questions of identity and purpose amidst a changing world.

## B) Identity and Purpose

### Identity

*Why has God called us into existence as a diocese?*

**We, the Episcopal Diocese of Minnesota, are a communion of Christian congregations and other ministries, rooted in the breadth of the Anglican tradition, called by God and empowered by the Holy Spirit to share in Christ's ministry of reconciliation.**

*Therefore...*

- ❖ We must continually discern the Spirit's movement in our rapidly-changing state and world.
- ❖ We believe that God has a mission in the rural areas, small towns, cities and suburbs of our state in which we have a particular role.
- ❖ In light of the Spirit's movement and God's mission, the primary focus of our ministry is congregations and the communities they serve.
- ❖ We gather in congregations in order to experience Christ's love, forgiveness, and healing, to be challenged by his Word and fed at his table, and then sent out in ministry to the world.
- ❖ As we celebrate our diversity, we will seek Christ's reconciliation of our divisions and share Christ's ministry of reconciliation with the world.
- ❖ We are bound to one another at all levels in an interdependent life of mutual partnership, sacrificial support and accountability that reflects the life of the Trinity.
- ❖ We intentionally engage our members to live out their baptismal vocation by discerning their spiritual gifts to serve in ministry in all the spheres of their lives.

"God's identity consists in the loving *communion* of three distinct yet inseparably united divine persons.... The church is created and called to reflect the communion of the Trinity."  
 –*What Are We Here For? A Theological Position Paper on Mission*

"We are called to breadth and depth in our worship and identity."  
 –*Congregational Visits*

"It is only in recognizing our own need for continual reconciliation in Christ that we will be able to join God's mission to bring reconciling communion to the world."  
 –*What Are We Here For?*

"We have entered a period of *discontinuous change* in our context today, when longstanding cultural norms and assumptions are breaking down and we don't know clearly what lies ahead." –*What Are We Here For?*

"We believe the Holy Spirit is calling us to go deeper in faith."  
 –*Congregational Visits*

"Both clergy and lay leaders want to partner in ministry, but many lack awareness of their spiritual gifts."—*2006 Mission Survey Report*

## Purpose

*What has God called us to do?*

**Our purpose as the Episcopal Diocese of Minnesota is to seed and cultivate vibrant congregations of maturing Christian disciples, equipping and emboldening them to be Christ's heart, hands and voice in the world.**

*Therefore...*

- ❖ We take seriously God's mission in the world and our responsibility to participate in it.
- ❖ In light of God's mission, our primary commitment will be developing healthy, vital congregations.
- ❖ We will attend deeply to the necessary spiritual transformation of our congregations and shared life together.
- ❖ Following the example of our Native American community's practice of Gospel-Based Discipleship, we will dwell together in the biblical narrative, allowing our imaginations to be shaped and inspired by God's story.
- ❖ We will raise up leaders capable of forming fully-committed disciples of Jesus who are equipped for ministry.
- ❖ The church's primary missionaries are its lay members in their daily life and work.
- ❖ We are called to an active, public presence in our communities for the common good.

"Now is the time to return to our roots and rediscover our identity and purpose as People of the Way of Jesus." —*What Are We Here For?*

"The church's mission is always rooted in place—specific cultural and geographical locales." —*What Are We Here For?*

"We are called to bring an old story about a people and God to life."—*Congregational Visits*

"In order to live as disciples in mission, we must all learn to dwell imaginatively in the story of Jesus." —*What Are We Here For?*

"There is considerable interest in returning to the church's roots through a fresh focus on the Bible, Jesus and the Holy Spirit."—*2006 Mission Survey Report*

"Respondents want greater partnership between congregations and the diocese."—*2006 Mission Survey Report*

"In order to live into a more missional understanding of the church, we need new generations of *missional leaders*." —*What Are We Here For?*

## Guiding Principles of the Plan

This plan is built upon a number of key principles that were voiced by leaders from the grass roots throughout the BCMS process. The specific goals listed in the pages that follow deal with the incarnation of these principles into areas of our common life and ministry. However, it is worth stating them clearly at the outset.

- ❖ **Spiritual transformation and theological renewal.** The BCMS believes that God is calling the Episcopal Church in Minnesota to a deep experience of spiritual transformation and renewal, one that touches all Episcopalians personally and deepens our collective experience and understanding of God.
- ❖ **Moving to a more collaborative style of organization and leadership.** Calling to mind the Trinity in whose image we are created, the church has an opportunity today to live more deeply into the vision for partnership, mutuality and community that we find in the New Testament—and for which so many of our members are calling.
- ❖ **Moving to a decentralized network.** In this Internet era, leading organizations of all types are eschewing centralized bureaucracies in favor of decentralized networks. The age of the corporate, bureaucratic, regulatory denomination has passed in American culture. Denominations are once again entering a period of major adaptation and reformation.
- ❖ **Moving to resourcing and empowering the grass roots.** For too long, the diocese has been focused on regulating the ministry within its borders. Now is a time to shift our emphasis instead to resourcing and empowering local disciples for ministry.
- ❖ **Moving into an expanded imagination for diverse expressions of church.** The Episcopal Church has been dominated for generations by a narrow set of assumptions about what church should look like. The diversity of our context today calls for a wider imagination for how we can faithfully express our Anglican tradition in a new and changing era.
- ❖ **Moving into a posture of innovation, creativity, mutual trust and risk taking.** The diocese has lived too long under a paralyzing cloud of mutual mistrust, suspicion and critique. This has inhibited our ability to innovate. We must diligently seek together the guiding, enlivening and reconciling leadership of the Holy Spirit to lift us into a better future, in which we dream big dreams and take big risks for the gospel.

# The Recommendations of the Bishop's Commission on Mission Strategy

*for*

The Spiritual Transformation of the Diocese of Minnesota  
and Our Fuller Participation in God's Mission

## **Goal 1: Spiritual Transformation and Fuller Participation in God's Mission**

For the congregations in the Diocese of Minnesota to experience a profound sense of shared spiritual transformation and theological renewal, which leads all Minnesota Episcopalians to participate more fully in God's mission in our world.

## **Goal 2: Renew Congregations in Context**

For every congregation to connect or re-connect its ministry directly to its particular mission field and become communities in which discipleship is a way of life for all God's people.

## **Goal 3: Recreate the Diocese as a Network**

To redevelop the entire diocese by the end of 2009 to function primarily as a network of congregations and ministries. These networks will exercise local initiative and responsibility for shared ministry in their contexts.

## **Goal 4: Develop Effective Stewardship of Financial Resources**

For the diocese to develop and implement fiscal strategies that make the best use of the resources God has entrusted to us, and to challenge and motivate all Episcopalians to generous and faithful giving.

*Each Goal has, in turn, a number of recommended **Mission and Ministry Initiatives**.*

## Introduction to the Plan

The Episcopal Diocese of Minnesota is at a critical juncture in its life. Almost every measurable trend is downward. Courageous and visionary efforts to address this reality over the past several decades have not succeeded in any measurable way. Apart from a significant change in the way the diocese conceives of its life and engages in its ministry, the BCMS holds out little hope that these patterns will be reversed in the future. That is why this process has focused on rethinking, reframing and reclaiming the identity and purpose of the diocese. Recommendations regarding these matters constitute the first part of this report. The plan outlined on the following pages is designed to build on and help implement the identity and purpose that have been named. It assumes that the following critical realities need to be understood, accepted and addressed.

- ❖ **No Simple Solutions** –The crisis within the diocese is systemic. It stems from both a complex set of relationship dynamics and a history dating back several decades. Any effort to plan our way out of this crisis merely by setting more goals and strategies is doomed to fail and will only compound the problems we face. Systemic change takes time. We will surely make mistakes in this process of transformation. We will need to continually evaluate our efforts and progress. We need to be patient and gracious with one another as we move forward.
- ❖ **Continued Short to Near Term Decline Likely** – We must face the prospect that the diocese will continue to shrink in size of membership and congregations in the next five to seven years. The complex character of the systemic crisis before us is simply too deep to be resolved quickly. Some congregations and ministries will not survive in the interim period, and the required changes will be too great for others to make and they will continue on the path of decline.
- ❖ **The Good News: God Is at Work in Our Midst** – In spite of this stark picture, we know that God is at work among us bringing about renewal. Signs of positive and constructive change abound. God has planted the seeds of our future in our midst. We are inspired by the countless people who have committed themselves to making God’s vision for our church a reality. We take confidence in the Spirit’s work and we do not lose heart (2 Corinthians 4:2).

# **Goal I:**

## **Spiritual Transformation and Fuller Participation in God's Mission**

**For the congregations in the Diocese of Minnesota to experience a profound sense of shared spiritual transformation and theological renewal, which leads all Minnesota Episcopalians to participate more fully in God's mission in our world.**

# Goal I: Spiritual Transformation and Fuller Participation in God's Mission

## Recommended Mission & Ministry Initiatives

### Initiative I: Spiritual Transformation

**W**e are in need of spiritual transformation and theological renewal, for it is only through God's grace and guidance that we will find inspiration for our shared life and ministries. The key arena for this spiritual transformation is within congregations. The most significant resource we have to offer for God's redeeming work is the ministry of the baptized – disciples living in faithfulness to Christ through their vocations in the world.

**Theological Foundations** – As Christians we are in communion because God is communion. For us, God is known in Three Persons indwelling as One Being. We share our life together because God draws us into God's own life marked by diversity in unity. As members of Christ's body, the Church, congregations give witness to God's life as they come together for worship and are dismissed for service, thus reflecting God's own movement. To bring integrity to our worship and adequacy to God's mission in the world, each baptized person has the status of a disciple, thereby making a life-long commitment to learning and service.

### Operational Strategies 2007-09

- I.1 Focus on Worship, Bible Study, Dwelling in the Word.
- I.2 Make resources available throughout the diocese for renewing worship and the spiritual practices of our members. These include: (a) sharing liturgical resources; (b) use of Gospel-Based Discipleship and other lay-led Bible study and prayer gatherings; and (c) learning from the Total Ministry model in relation to discipleship.
- I.3 Plan a strategy for cultivating a diocesan-wide understanding and use of spiritual gifts, both in relation to ministry in the church and within one's vocation in the world.
- I.4 Convene conversations with groups of leaders throughout the diocese that will invite their imagination and creativity for enhancing the ministry of all the baptized.
- I.5 We believe there is a need for a sacramental expression of our openness to God's call that would involve a diocesan-wide liturgy of repentance, reconciliation and re-dedication of our lives to God's purposes and mission in the world.

## **Goal 2:**

# **Renew Congregations in Context**

**For every congregation to connect or re-connect its ministry directly to its particular mission field and become a community in which discipleship is a way of life for all God's people.**

## Goal 2: Renew Congregations in Context

### Recommended Mission & Ministry Initiatives

#### Initiative 2: Engage Congregational Contexts

One of the greatest challenges facing the congregations of the diocese is that their ministries have often not kept pace with changes in their surrounding contexts. Our congregations need to engage their members about what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ and how to exercise their spiritual gifts both within the congregation and the communities they serve. This requires us all to re-imagine and re-engage our congregations' unique mission field and to equip our members for Christian discipleship. Such work will raise significant questions in all our congregations regarding their own identity and purpose, and in many cases this will generate confusion and pain as congregations address needed change. The potential fruits of this work, however, are clearly worth the effort, as our congregations come to experience the excitement of renewed life and ministry.

**Theological Foundations** – From the beginning of creation to the “fullness of time” (Galatians 4:4) when God became incarnate in Jesus, the Divine Being blessed the world as the location for his presence and glory. Moreover, it is for the world that “he gave his only begotten Son” (John 3:16) and it is the world that God in Christ “was reconciling...to himself” (2 Corinthians 5:19). A feature of contemporary life is that we live in many worlds—of home and office, of politics and law, of art and poverty, of work and play. Yet, for God there is one world connected through the church to “one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all” (Ephesians 4:6). The challenge for the church is to align ourselves with God’s view of the world and not necessarily our own. As disciples of Jesus called to witness to God’s life and care for the world, we scan the horizon of every world in search of opportunities to display God’s glory and to meet human need. Indeed, God’s mission is global, regional and local.

#### Operational Strategies 2007-09

- 2.1 Identify resources and processes to assist congregations in engaging or reengaging their ministry areas, with particular emphasis on learning how those areas are responding to changes in culture, socio-economics and population.
  - 2.1.1 Identify resources and processes that are available today for helping congregations re-define and re-engage their ministry areas. These resources are readily available and have helped congregations of other denominations experience renewal.
- 2.2 Pilot projects of networking congregations for revitalized ministry.
  - 2.2.1 Invite three networks of congregations to take up the challenge of engaging in a formal process for revitalization and renewal of their ministries.
  - 2.2.2 Walk alongside these pilot projects, learning from them and circulating to the entire diocese what the congregations are learning.
- 2.3 Sharing stories and cultivating imagination. Develop a communications strategy to continually lift up before the entire diocese progress made by congregations working on re-defining and reengaging their mission fields (both successes and learnings from failure).

### Initiative 3: Children, Youth and Family Ministry

For the congregations of the diocese to develop ministries that promote the spiritual growth of children, youth and family members within a theological understanding of lay discipleship, vocation and God's mission in the world. One of the sober realities of the diocese is that many congregations no longer have significant numbers of children and youth, and our ministries that serve children, youth and families have atrophied. The aging of our church is a symptom of decades-long decline. The absence of families will be addressed for many congregations as they connect or re-connect their ministries to their mission field—the communities in which they serve. We recognize that all congregations long for success in attracting families with children, but that for some the resources required are as yet beyond their reach. We must, therefore, make this a diocesan-wide priority, establishing networks of congregations to maximize resources and opportunities for ministry that are available.

**Theological Foundations** – In the prophet Isaiah's vision of the peaceable kingdom, God will act to make possible that which seems impossible for people short on hope and faith. Leaders will be called forth to bring about God's reign of justice and righteousness and not only will "the wolf live with the lamb" but "a little child shall lead them" (Isaiah 11:6). Doubtless this is Jesus' view of children as he used them to instruct his adult disciples in the ways of the kingdom (Matthew 18:2-3). In the Episcopal Church, the baptized of every age are acknowledged as recipients of the Holy Spirit and thereby manifest in some way God's life. Moreover, emerging generations of young adults live within different cultures than many older generations, and the gospel must be incarnated creatively and faithfully within these cultures, primarily by those young adults themselves.

#### Operational Strategies 2007-09

- 3.1 Study current demographics of congregations and their contexts.
- 3.2 Convene conversations of persons with gifts and passion for these ministries.
- 3.3 Empower young adults to try new forms of church.
- 3.4 Determine how camps and conferences effectively strengthen these ministry areas on a diocesan level (Teens Encounter Christ is a noteworthy example).

### Initiative 4: Multi-Cultural Ministries

For the diocese to become a multi-cultural community of congregations that reflects the diverse ethnic realities of our state, where all congregations are empowered to have a shared voice within a culture of mutual accountability. The diocese has historic roots in Native American and African American ministries. Given the increasing populations of immigrants throughout Minnesota, there are numerous opportunities before us to develop ethnic-specific as well as multi-cultural congregations. This work needs to move from the margins to the mainstream if the diocese is to reflect the richness of our mission field.

**Theological Foundations** – Diversity in unity; unity in diversity is the very character of our Triune God. Both as individual disciples and as Christian congregations we are called into this Trinitarian life so we may experience the profound joy of being in union and communion. As followers of Jesus our constant prayer is that our Father's will be done on earth as in heaven. Although "what will be has not yet been revealed" (1 John 3:2), and our actual knowledge of

heaven falls short of its mystery and promise, we are blessed with images in Scripture that help us to imagine the fullness of God's glorious life. Moreover, our belief in Jesus' incarnation causes us to incarnate as best as we can God's future here on earth. In heaven, the Father's house has "many dwelling places"; his mighty mansion has a place for all (John 14). In the heavenly realm, the seer John sees that "there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne before the Lord" (Revelation 7:9ff). God's mission then is to make noticeable on earth the unity in diversity of heaven, and the church is to be a vibrant sign of this kind of life.

### **Operational Strategies 2007-09**

- 4.1 Invite Native American leaders and congregations to help design a process of full partnership with other members of the diocese.
- 4.2 Invite African American leaders and congregations to help design a process of full partnership with other members of the diocese.
- 4.3 Develop a strategy for ethnic specific and multi-cultural congregations.
  - 4.3.1 Engage those congregations with recent histories of ethnic-specific ministries, inviting the leaders to share their experiences and design a process to equip the diocese for this ministry.

### **Initiative 5: Creative Ministry Models**

**F**or the diocese to learn from its experience with Total Ministry and other models. The Total Ministry model has been spiritually-empowering and effective in many congregations of the diocese. This approach to ministry merits careful review and further consideration for expanded use, as well as consideration of other alternative models.

**Theological Foundations** – As the baptizing community, the church receives the gift of the Holy Spirit and is thereby enriched every time a newly baptized person is welcomed in the community of faith. In continuity with the differing gifts of the Spirit brought to expression in the earliest days of the church (Romans 12, Corinthians 12), the work of congregations is carried out as the particular gifts of preaching, healing, presiding and administering of various individuals are recognized and affirmed to be offered for the total benefit of all and for their participation in God's mission.

### **Operational Strategies 2007-09**

- 5.1 Evaluate the current use of Total Ministry and its present effectiveness.
  - 5.1.1 We propose a thorough review of the Total Ministry model within the diocese, in order to identify its strengths and challenges.
- 5.2 Review and explore other ministry models for their applicability to mission and ministry in the Diocese of Minnesota.

# **Goal 3:**

## **Recreate the Diocese as a Network**

**To redevelop the entire diocese by the end of 2009 to function primarily as a network of congregations and ministries. These networks will exercise local initiative and responsibility for shared ministry in their contexts.**

## Goal 3: Recreate the Diocese as a Network

### Recommended Mission & Ministry Initiatives

#### Initiative 6: Develop Network Infrastructure:

We need to re-conceive and redevelop the diocese as a network of congregations and ministries where organization, communication and the use of resources flow along the lines of meaningful relationships and shared ministry commitments. We anticipate that much of this network will be experimental in character, especially initially, but that patterns once established will become more formally operational over time. In the short term, we may decide to maintain existing structures, such as regions, where they are helpful as an overlay on this emerging and evolving network. We need to devote attention, time and resources to cultivate the informal connections between congregations and ministries that are already coming into existence in numerous places.

**Theological Foundations** – Because our life as Christians resides in the living Christ, is continually informed by the biblical narrative and is forever open to the action of the Holy Spirit, we expect new expressions of the churches' life to appear. We recall St. Paul's proclamation that in Christ we are "a new creation" (2 Corinthians 5:17). The church must always be incarnate within particular cultures, and culture is always changing. Today, our culture is shifting from bureaucratic and hierarchical forms of organization to decentralized networks, the primary example being the Internet. People seek connection through relationships more than institutional allegiances. In redeveloping the diocese as a network, we hope to follow the emerging work of the Holy Spirit and allow congregations to experience being "a new creation" as we engage others in fresh and culturally-relevant ways.

#### Operational Strategies 2007-09

- 6.1 Map existing and emerging networks and identify actual and potential hubs.
- 6.2 Invite and convene conversations among existing and emerging networks.
  - 6.2.1 Recruit, orient, and resource a group of facilitators to convene and lead conversations among networks of congregations and ministries.
  - 6.2.2 Invite existing and emerging networks of congregations to explore how their ministries can be strengthened and enhanced.
- 6.3 Identify hub congregations and their roles.
  - 6.3.1 Determine criteria for hub congregations.
  - 6.3.2 Identify potential congregations which can serve as hub congregations within a network of congregations and ministries.
- 6.4 Reconfigure the structure and organization of the diocese.
  - 6.4.1 Based on the patterns experienced in working with the emerging networks of congregations, finalize recommendation to the Diocesan Council regarding organizational structure to replace the regional structure.

## Initiative 7: Empower, Engage and Inspire Lay Disciples

For the congregations of the diocese to invite and support the full participation of laity in the life of the church, where lay disciples feel empowered to have a mutual voice, are actively engaged in ministry in their congregations and the communities these serve, and where they are theologically aware of how to understand their vocational call to carry out their ministries. Congregations exist for the purpose of bringing individuals into a life-transforming relationship with Jesus Christ, to foster a communal identity among individuals as the people of God, and to equip God's people for love and service to the world in God's name. Lay disciples of Jesus Christ are the church's greatest gift and resource. We need to invest our best resources into the formation of spiritually-mature, fully-empowered disciples of Jesus Christ.

**Theological Foundations** – One of the implications of the church's renewal of the sacrament of baptism is not only to increase our awareness of the Spirit's life in the baptizing community but also to highlight the status of all the baptized. In the church's Outline of the Faith it is to be noted that the "ministers of the Church are lay persons, bishops, priests and deacons" (BCP p. 855). Importantly, lay persons are not only recognized as the foundational base in the life of the church upon which the other orders of ministry rest, but in this outline they are given a job description worthy of true disciples: "to bear witness to [Christ] wherever they may be; and according to the gifts given them, to carry on Christ's work of reconciliation in the world." Fundamental to the church's understanding of ministry, then, is that it be practiced in a mutual and collaborate manner according to the Spirit's gifts.

### Operational Strategies 2007-09

- 7.1 See Operational Strategies under Goal I.
- 7.2 Empower and equip lay leaders for ministry in their contexts of relationships and work, in their congregations and in the ministry of the diocese.
  - 7.2.1 Work with the emerging networks of congregations to create corresponding groups of lay leaders, providing them opportunities to interact, share ideas and plan for ministry.
  - 7.2.2 Devote particular energy to the identification and equipping of young adults in our congregations.
  - 7.2.3 Determine the role of campus ministry in our diocesan vision and honestly assess the needed resources for its successful implementation.
- 7.3 Strengthen the leadership and governance capacity of Diocesan Council, Standing Committee and the Trustees from among lay disciples.

## Initiative 8: Re-Envision Clergy Leadership

For the clergy of the diocese to engage thoughtfully and intentionally in a shared process of reflection and reevaluation of their roles in relation to a changing paradigm for ministry. We recognize the importance of ordained clergy leadership in the life of the church. Generally, clergy are not well equipped to address current changes and ministry challenges.

**Theological Foundations** – In its Theological Position Paper on Mission, "What Are We Here For?," the BCMS observes that "in recent years in the Episcopal Church, our predominant model of clergy leadership has been that of family care-giver/chaplain and administrator of a

non-profit voluntary organization.” And further, it observes that “we have generally not developed leaders who are focused on unleashing the missional energies of the laity.” It argues, therefore, that this model should change so we develop a new generation of missional leaders who focus on “cultivating communities in which the challenges and demands of people’s lives are placed in fruitful conversation with the biblical narrative” and “in which all members of the church discern and activate their God-given spiritual gifts and talents for ministry in daily life...” (p. 16).

### **Operational Strategies 2007-09**

- 8.1 Provide opportunities for clergy to deepen their spiritual lives and theological insights.
- 8.2 Equip clergy in leadership development, gifts discernment and collaborative decision making.
- 8.3 Strengthen the spirit of mutual support and collaboration among clergy and lay leaders.
- 8.4 Establish an expectation of mission-minded clergy in the discernment and call processes of the diocese.

### **Initiative 9: Select Bishop and Diocesan Staff Capable of and Committed to Leading Plan to Fruition**

**F**or the search process to identify and recommend candidates for a new bishop who can provide visionary leadership in implementing this plan, and who can recruit and lead a staff that is able to support that work. With the diocese facing a period of leadership transition, this is a critical time for clarity and alignment of leadership priorities. The bishop and diocesan staff must be fully committed to the implementation of this plan.

**Theological Foundations** – Regardless whether church polity and leadership are episcopal or congregational, the intent and style of the chosen leader corresponds to the success of the church’s effort in ministry and mission. Because God in Christ has been made known in history (Luke 3) and has a history (the biblical record and tradition of the church), God’s mission is always carried out in this place and at this time. At best, the hands of the church’s clock match the movement of God’s time as it goes about choosing leaders under the aegis of the Holy Spirit. The discernment of the BCMS at this time is to bring focus to congregations and to highlight their importance in propelling God’s mission forward. Given that Episcopal congregations have expectations about the bishop and staff providing leadership, it is critical that their leadership be consonant with the vision and program of the diocese as a whole.

### **Questions and Issues 2007-09**

Throughout the BCMS process the following questions have surfaced. They require discussion before operational strategies are drafted:

1. *What type of presence should the bishop have in the diocese?*
2. *What are the implications of this report for the search criteria for the election of a new bishop?*
3. *What type of diocesan staff will best serve the implementation of this plan, especially in light of the limited resources available to employ staff?*
4. *What services might better be outsourced rather than staffed internally within the diocesan office? Should personnel in congregations be utilized on a part-time basis for staff services? Should staff roles be linked to congregational cluster networks and hub congregations?*

5. *How can the diocesan staff best nurture and support grass-roots, bottom up ministry, focusing on vibrant congregations and investing time and resources in growing ministries that are strategic?*

## **Initiative 10: Aligned, Integrated and Supportive Organization and Structure**

**F**or the diocese to develop and implement a design for its organization and structure which is aligned and integrated with its identity, purpose and mission and ministry priorities. We must ensure that the organization and structure of the diocese are designed to carry out and fully implement its identity, purpose, and mission and ministry priorities. This design, in terms of achieving alignment and integration, will take time to develop and implement as the diocese begins to live into reshaping the paradigm for its life and ministry. One option is to utilize a provisional organization and structure during the transition period. Ideally, the new organization and structure should be in place by the time the new bishop takes leadership in the diocese.

**Theological Foundations** – Because the church is the extension of the incarnation and is sacramental in character, its form is affected by both godly intent and human wisdom. In other words, church structure and organization are contingent on its identity and purpose and the best way to do things. Also, due to the extent of God's mission and the width of the world, priorities in ministry and mission need to be established and constantly reviewed. The Ten Commandments may be carved in stone, but God's word about mission through the church is constantly being rewritten.

### **Operational Strategies 2007-09**

- 10.1 Attend to organization and structure issues during period of transition to new paradigm in a proactive, intentional and strategic manner.
- 10.2 Develop a transition design that encourages and supports grass roots initiative in partnership with the diocese and staff.
- 10.3 Develop a transition design to move from regional structure to one that supports the congregational networks and hub congregations.
- 10.4 In light of the sale of the present property housing the diocesan office, the BCMS suggests that the diocesan office utilize temporary space during this period of transition until the requirements of the new paradigm are more clearly in focus.

# **Goal 4:**

## **Develop Effective Stewardship of Financial Resources**

**For the Diocese of Minnesota to develop and implement fiscal strategies that make the best use of the resources God has entrusted to us, and to challenge and motivate all Episcopalians to generous and faithful giving.**

## Goal 4: Develop Effective Stewardship of Financial Resources

### Recommended Mission & Ministry Initiatives

#### Initiative 1 I: Effective Stewardship of financial resources

There are significant resources among the Episcopalians of the diocese. We believe stewardship needs to be addressed in two ways: first, as an outgrowth of personal faith and Christian practice; second, in response to a clearly articulated and compelling vision of ministry. There are many sound, biblically-based stewardship materials that the diocese could make available to congregations to great effect. Yet the basic principle that money follows vision has been consistently demonstrated in the church. As noted in the book of Proverbs, “Without vision, the people perish.” The current financial difficulties of the diocese are, at heart, related to a lack of a clear and compelling vision for the future that can inspire confidence and build trust. This situation will not be solved overnight. We believe that difficulties in meeting financial needs will continue in the next five to seven years, but as the new paradigm for ministry begins to bear fruit, we anticipate that the present financial struggles will gradually ease.

**Theological Foundations** – Money is stored energy and has to do with soul. For the church to have soul it needs to be both responsible and adventuresome. God is changeless at the core but expressive in action. The church, therefore, is not meant simply to sit on money but to save it judiciously and spend it mostly in a wise and considered manner except at times—because of God’s radical generosity and mission imperative—when it is called to be extravagant and participate in the risk of God’s new creation.

#### Operational Strategies 2007-09

- 11.1 Design a diocesan budget that focuses on supporting local mission and ministry through emerging networks and hub congregations.
  - 11.1.1 Determine essential staffing requirements to support the new paradigm.
  - 11.1.2 Consider strategy of purchasing staff time of congregational leaders to facilitate cluster networks.
  - 11.1.3 Convene a conversation within all the networks about the Apportionment for the Common Good (ACG) in relationship to diocesan mission and ministry priorities with a plan to develop a functional strategy for ACG by 2009 that provides for a diocesan budget consistent with our new priorities and focus on healthy congregations.
- 11.2 Develop a financial accountability system in the diocese that is accessible for providing input and which is transparent in reporting results.
  - 11.2.1 Operating budget and expenditures.
  - 11.2.2 Endowment and capital resources in relation to the trustees.
- 11.3 Create an option for congregations to reduce their ACG if they are able to clearly identify how these funds will be used to enhance local mission and ministry.

11.4 Explore how the newly appointed Development Committee can help support diocesan ministries during the transition period.

11.4.1 Implement a strategy of providing networks and hub congregations with resources for writing grants to fund local initiatives.

11.4.2 Invite potential donors to invest in the newly emerging vision.

11.4.3 Begin to frame what a long-term capital campaign might look like to support the emerging mission and ministry needs of the diocese.

## **Initiative 12: Effective stewardship and utilization of facilities and land**

**F**or the diocese, through its emerging networks and hub congregations, to develop and implement a design for the effective stewardship and utilization of its physical assets of facilities and land and explore sites for new congregations. The diocese and its congregations have significant resources in land and facilities. These resources are not always effectively utilized, however, to support mission and ministry. We anticipate more effective stewardship of these resources as congregational ministries are revitalized, but there will still be need for an intentional assessment of current resources. Moreover, the diocese sorely needs a strategic development plan for the placement of new congregations.

**Theological Foundations** – A judgment as to what constitutes effective stewardship rests on a discernment of how best the church can participate in God’s mission at any given point in time. Giving testimony to God’s faithfulness may result in supposed inefficiencies whereas aligning oneself with God’s surprising side and creative spirit may require bold moves in the deployment of resources.

### **Operational Strategies 2007-09**

12.1 Redefine the stewardship of facilities and land theologically, and then develop a clear strategy and implement it for their effective stewardship.

12.2 Encourage the development of new forms of congregations through local initiatives within congregational networks and hub congregations, some of which may require different approaches to facilities and land.

12.3 Develop a clear inventory of existing properties and their current capital requirements for maintenance and required improvements, and determine which properties are viable for long-term ministry.

12.4 Explore an intentional strategy for transfer of some existing facilities to newly emerging ethnic-specific congregations.

12.5 Suggest that Diocesan Council determine what size, type and location of diocesan office best serves this new paradigm of diocesan ministry.

## Accomplishing the Work Ahead

### Continuity with and Continuation of Intentional Planning Required

One reason why good faith planning efforts in the past failed was due to lack of leadership continuity in the implementation stages. Another was the lack of alignment among leadership bodies in the diocese and the inevitable result of competing interests. A new leadership body needs to succeed the BCMS to oversee the work of spiritual and systemic transformation. For this work to move to the center of our common life, that group needs to be rooted in the bishop's office and leadership bodies of our diocese, and yet not be overly constricted by past paradigms and priorities.

Members of the current BCMS are committed to the implementation of this emerging vision, but we also recognize that success depends upon collective commitment and leadership within diocesan systems of power and accountability. We recommend that the bishop and Council appoint a succeeding group immediately following Diocesan Convention 2007 in order to allow the new group to organize itself for work in early November to structure a specific set of time-lined steps for the implementation of the goals in "Rethinking and Reclaiming Our Identity, Purpose and Mission." Outside consultation has served the BCMS process well, and we strongly endorse moving forward with similar guidance and systemic accountability. At the same time, diocesan staffing and resources need to be aligned with this effort.

### Recommendation for the Succeeding Group

A leadership team of 14-16 persons to be appointed by the Bishop and Council:

- ❖ At least six (6) members from the current BCMS Steering Committee;
- ❖ Additional members to be appointed from:
  - The existing governance and management bodies of the Diocese of Minnesota, including Council, Trustees, Standing Committee, Commission on Ministry and diocesan staff;
  - Other representative bodies of the diocese such as the Department of Indian Work.

This leadership team will be a *working group* comprised of persons willing to continue the action research approach that has characterized the process so far. That means engaging grass roots members across the diocese in reflective conversations and study that build trust and bring about the hoped-for change along the way. The leadership team will coordinate the work of a series of action teams responsible for carrying out the specific initiatives contained in this report. This work must become the central work of the diocese for the next few years, involving all those who have a stake in our future, especially those holding formal authority.

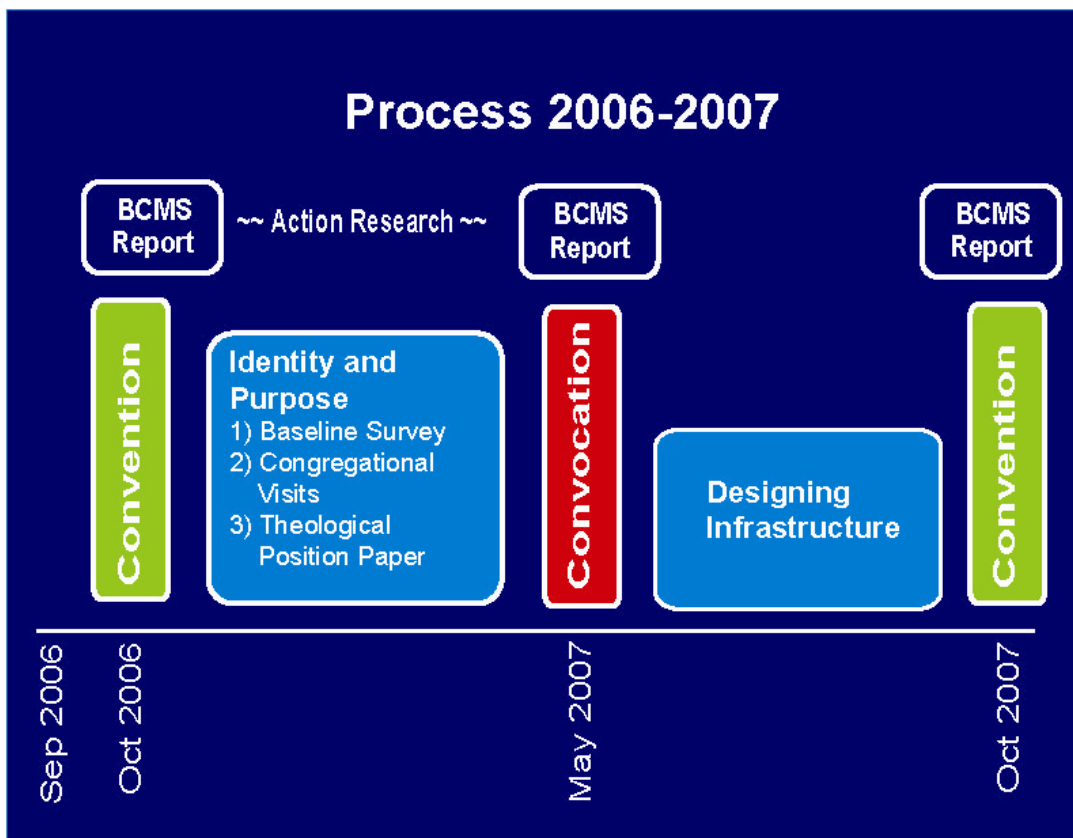
### First Action Step

Meet in early November 2007 to structure a specific set of time-lined action steps for the full implementation of all the goals in the "Rethinking, Reframing and Reclaiming Our Identity, Purpose and Mission" document.

## Appendix A: The Bishop's Commission on Mission Strategy (BCMS) Process

**The BCMS process is a dynamic engagement with the diocese at multiple levels.**

- ❖ We are using an approach known as **Action Research**, which involves implementing a process of action steps that begin to generate the change that is being sought along the way. This happens through a continuous cycle of diagnosis, planning, action, and reflection.
- ❖ We are developing and utilizing information from **multiple data sources** which reflect a variety of perspectives, including those of grass roots congregations, leaders within the diocese, and intentional theological reflection.
- ❖ We are making efforts to conduct the process in a manner that focuses on **building relationships** and **cultivating trust**.



**The BCMS process has brought three principal sources of information into conversation to discern an emerging identity and purpose for the diocese.**

- ❖ A **baseline survey** of leaders' behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs about mission was conducted in fall 2006. A very robust majority of 787 leaders representing the breadth of the diocese responded and shared nearly 1,000 write-in comments.
- ❖ Every congregation was invited to participate in ongoing **congregational discernment team visits** in which conversations are being held at the grass roots level about God's movement in that congregation, what is impeding that movement, and how it can be understood theologically.
- ❖ A **theological position paper on mission**, "What Are We Here For?" was developed by a team of leaders for the purpose of framing and initiating an in-depth conversation about mission theology in the diocese.



## Identity, Purpose, Mission and Ministry, and Organization

**The BCMS process is working intentionally to address foundational questions of identity and purpose before moving to organization and structure.**

- ❖ **Identity:** Why has God called us into existence as a diocese?
- ❖ **Purpose:** What has God called us to do?
- ❖ **Mission and Ministry:** How is the Spirit leading us in discerning priorities?
- ❖ **Organization:** How can we best organize our common life to reflect our identity and fulfill God's call and purpose?



## Mission and Ministry

*How is the Spirit leading us in discerning priorities?*

**In order to live into God’s purpose for us, we must focus on the following essential mission and ministry priorities:**

- ❖ **Deepening the discipleship of all members** by helping them know the biblical story and their place in it; practicing the spiritual disciplines of our faith; and fulfilling the promises of the Baptismal Covenant.
- ❖ **Creatively drawing children, youth, and young adults into the heart of the church’s life** in order that the living treasures of faith we have received may anchor, nourish, and enliven them and future generations.
- ❖ **Engaging our changing context** through turning our churches outward in their focus; studying our communities; learning about and from the diverse populations in our midst; and cultivating a fresh imagination for the forms that Christian community and local mission must take.
- ❖ **Responding to the expanding multi-cultural communities in our midst** by embracing immigrants and refugees.
- ❖ **Equipping all members for ministry in daily life** through spiritual gifts discernment and collaborative leadership, so that all may know and tell the story of God’s movement in their lives. Total Ministry is one pivotal means to accomplish this.
- ❖ **Empowering and assisting congregations** through cultivating servant leaders capable of leading people deeper into Christian faith and more boldly into the world in mission; networking for ministry partnerships; and sharing resources and best practices for congregational renewal.

“Leaders who are most engaged in mission practices are also most knowledgeable about their spiritual gifts, confident in proclaiming the gospel and feel most vital about their personal faith.” —*2006 Mission Survey Report*

“We experience God in the lively presence of children—children are full members of our community.”  
—*Congregational Visits*

“We are changing who we are and stretching as a community while honoring our past.”—*Congregational Visits*

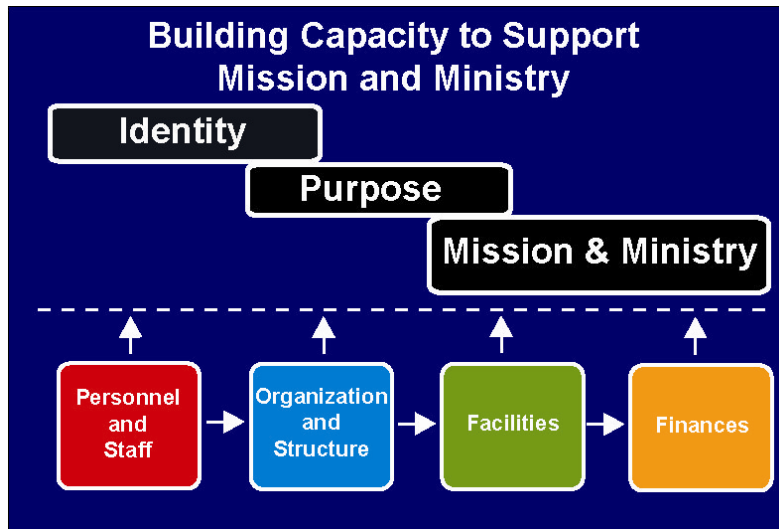
“Many respondents want a more collaborative, transparent and empowering relationship among the bishop, diocesan staff, clergy, and congregations.” —*2006 Mission Survey Report*

“The shift to shared ministry is invigorating everyone. It is like the church is resurrected.” —*Congregational Visits*

“Churches across the diocese could learn valuable lessons from the principles of Total Ministry and our experience with it.”—*What Are We Here For?*

## Organizational Implications

How can we best organize our common life to reflect our identity and fulfill God's call and purpose?



**Implications must be developed and explored for the following:**

- ❖ **Personnel and Staff**
- ❖ **Organization and Structure**
- ❖ **Facilities**
- ❖ **Finances**

“We are the inheritors of many denominational, diocesan and local church structures, assumptions and practices that bear critical reflection in today’s changing world.” –  
*What Are We Here For?*

“Respondents’ comments suggest a strong need for organizational adaptation and change.... There is a recurrent criticism of diocesan and clergy leadership, structures, and financial practices.” –2006  
*Mission Survey Report*

“In a missional era, the episcopate might discover a new purpose in facilitating relationships, partnerships and resource-sharing for mission among congregations and other bodies as bridge-builders.”  
–*What Are We Here For?*

“The governance of the diocese should be more resource-providing than managerial.”  
—*Congregational Visits*

## BCMS Participants

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The Rev. Jeff Nelson

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The Rev. Daniel Pearson

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Sarah Strickland

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