

## 1.3 Practical Outline for Thinking about Church Planting

*Provided in note form only by The Rt. Rev. David Colin Jones, Bishop Suffragan of Virginia*

### I. WE HAVE BEEN CALLED TO LOVE.

Jesus taught us to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. Mission is at the heart of the life of the church. Therefore mission is not an option. A prayerful sense of mission and vision is at the heart of a growing congregation. Mission is not an option for a Christian. We have been given the gift of the Holy Spirit in Baptism. We have been sent into the world as witnesses to God's love. In the appearance of the Risen Lord on the evening of the day of the Resurrection, Jesus said: "As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you." We have been sent to bear God's good news

The compassion of Jesus for the world is a driving focus of mission for the Church. All of us know the words of Jesus "I was hungry and you gave me food."

### II. THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

The mission of the church unites the Great Commission and the Great Commandment. Neither can stand alone. A Great Commission Church is also a Great Commandment Church.

**We go because we are loved.** It is the love of our savior that is the driving force for mission.

**God provides for God's work.** (The bad news is that God does not fund our pet projects!)

Effective leadership is essential. A Church will not grow without Godly leadership. At the heart of Godly leadership is an authentic vision. **The main task of leadership is to discover God's vision for Mission and Ministry**

### III. VISION

**The Vision comes from God.**

- It comes from constant prayer -
- It embraces dreams and hopes -
- It describes a future reality -
- It is descriptive of what God is calling us to be

**A Vision from God is Exciting.**

- It stirs the heart
- It energizes the listener
- It inspires the leader
- It is audacious and bold

**Vision Drives Mission and Ministry.**

- Biblical visions are revealed, not created
- Biblical visions link to spiritual formation, not strategic planning.
- Biblical visions are a joyful song, not a burdensome obligation.

*Thomas Bandy (Net Results 9/99)*

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### IV. Core Values (Virginia's sample)

1. Our relationship with Jesus Christ must be lived out in Christian community.
2. Our focus is on evangelism.
3. We embrace risk and the necessity to think and act creatively as we pursue God's call to plant new churches. Grounded in Scriptures and enriched by our tradition, we enthusiastically embrace new methods of communicating the unchanging Gospel to an ever-changing world. We value a willingness to explore and implement innovative means of planting new churches. Church planters must be evangelistic leaders who are builders, not simply pastoral leaders who are caretakers.
4. We rely upon God who always provides the resources to do the work we are called to do. This reliance requires us to do our homework, so that our recommendations and decisions are based on solid research, reflection, consultation and learning from our experience.

Every congregation has core values and it is important to be honest about them. *One congregation values unity so highly that it is determined to avoid any issues that could possibly be a source of conflict. New members are rarely welcomed and new issues can not be brought to the table. In this instance, a core value is a hindrance to growth.*

*An example from the Commission on Church Planting from the Diocese of Virginia*

*- to transform the culture of the Diocese of Virginia so that it may become a place where church planting is normative, expected, and self-perpetuating.*

*We envision a Diocese whose congregations are mission-minded and experiencing exponential growth, whose lay and ordained leaders are stepping forward to help plant new congregations, and whose benefactors are giving an abundance of resources, all of which will help to change the culture of the Episcopal Church nationwide.*

#### **IV. QUESTIONS THAT NEED TO BE ASKED FOR A CHURCH TO GROW IN MISSION**

In every congregation, critical questions that must be resolved as core values are being discussed. In each case, the value needs to be discussed in the light of our gospel mandate. Any church considering planting should reflect on how it answers the following.

**A. Ownership.** Who really owns the church? Do we really believe that God is the owner? One congregation is known to outsiders as the memorial Church of one family. Let's call it for lack of a better word "Jones Memorial." It has no signs on the highway and no service times are posted. There is no newsletter. News is passed orally from member to member. On the rare occasion when a newcomer visits, he or she is politely received and is treated like a guest. But that person is not ever invited to participate.

**B. Hospitality.** Will the new person be permitted to be a host or will she always be treated as a guest. One congregation deals with that question around the issue of the control of the kitchen. Access to the locked cabinets is limited to those who are the real members.

**C. Control.** Will a new person be allowed to make critical decisions?

**D. Gathering for worship.** Are we willing to adapt our worship style to make worship more welcoming to new people?

**E. Alternate styles of worship.** Are we committed to the assumption that one size fits all? Are we willing to allow alternate times and styles of worship?

**F. Must we continue to be one happy parish family?**

Must we do everything together? *In pre marriage conversations with young couples, for a number of months I asked, “What would it take on my part to get you to come to Church every week?” I learned that I would need to change the tune, change the tone, and change the time. [It’s not clear how his example of marriage prep relates to “one happy parish family”]*

After careful research, consultation, listening, discussion and prayer, it is important to **set the pain priorities of the mission and also clear measurable goals** – that is, targets of mission and ministry.

***It is not the task of headquarters to discern local ministry. I say “You know your neighborhood. You live here. You pray here. It is your responsibility to discern and decide.”***

Choices must be made. A decision to develop a large ministry to people who have experienced separation and divorce may preclude another decision. A strategy for growth must have an identifiable target. The decision to reach a person is also a decision to fully incorporate that person into the life and ministry of the church. We are attracting members not guests.

**V. THE ROLES OF LEADERSHIP**

A. The **primary task** of leaders is discernment of God’s call. The **complimentary task** to a ministry of discernment is the ministry of releasing resources for mission. There are three areas of concern for the leadership to manage:

1. **Budgets** - need to reflect mission priorities. Mission priorities must be determined before the budget meeting
2. Allocation of physical **resources**. The kitchen, parish hall, VCR, Van, and the library are physical resources, The must be dedicated to mission
3. Selection of key **leadership. Possibly the most neglected area of leadership is the choice of leaders.** What is essential is authenticity. Is she for real? Does he really believe it? Will she committed to see it through? Growth can not be achieved by consensus. Pastoral emphasis does not lead to growth. Possibly the most important task of discernment and decision is the choice of leaders. The first task is mutual discernment of call. In the Diocese of Virginia, we have a three day process of assessing potential Church Planters. We are looking for a particular mix of gifts. Our call is based on our sense that a person is well suited to a particular ministry. The same principle applies to the choice of lay leaders. The Call of the Church is equally important to the call sensed by an individual. *I recall one angry woman who felt called to lead children’s worship. The feedback from teachers indicated that she was not called. She was not permitted to be a leader of worship during my tenure.*

**B. Determination of spiritual gifts.** Each has a gift: expect to find a full compliment [I \*think\* it is complement—not sure] of gifts

**C. Affirm genuine authentic ministry.** Often what a person does well is not seen as a gift or a ministry.

#### **D. Vision Casting.**

The rare privilege of a Christian leader is to cast an exciting vision - one which has come from God. I am suggesting an intentional move from a pastor centered focus to a leadership focus - from doing the ministry for the people to the mobilization of the ministry of all the people. If we are to grow congregations, we must prepare the laity for leadership in mission and ministry. With a godly vision, a sense of call, a commitment to core values and a clear target for ministry. A rector has the privilege of nurturing leaders - of holding up leaders as heroes in the congregation. If mission is the priority, make the leaders of mission heroes.

**E. Communication is essential.** How is the news shared about new ministry initiatives? Communication of a new vision is essential. Every member needs to be able to articulate the vision - The person in the pew needs to feel that she is part of the action. The new member needs to be drawn in. Use creative publications - a well written newsletter and special mailings. Broad communication of new vision - , lively announcements, attractive bulletin boards, Enthusiastic announcements - quality public reports - High profile appointments of leadership. Provide visible support for training leaders. Finally, one of the most effective ways of communicating a vision is through Personal testimony. An authentic account of a mission trip and how it changed a life can have profound results. All may share and witness publicly.

**A mission minded community is a highly motivated community.** People who have responded to an authentic call from God are not likely to want their ministries to be controlled by others. Committees designed to control what others do are a hindrance to growing churches and should be dissolved. The responsibility for ministry should be placed at the ministry level with clear accountability established. A person gifted in youth ministry should not be required to get approval for a program from a committee of people not part of the ministry. What is needed throughout a growing church is a **permission giving style**. It is helpful to launch **empowered ministries**. As a parish priest, I did not try to control ministry, I was an encourager and launcher of ministry. It is important to allow failure and to **encourage initiative**. Ready fire aim!

**Regular meetings for support** send a strong message. They are to go and do likewise. **Communication with people in the field is essential.** Church Planters (who live on the edge) have frequent dark nights of the soul. Take their calls. They represent us. Encourage them to support their own leadership teams. Be dedicated to providing coaching for people in stressful leadership positions. One of our vicars has a coach in California. We have contracted for 12 thirty minute conversations a year. Preparation for those conversations, however, may take half a day. It is important to pay constant attention to what is happening.

We can never do too much **training** and equipping of the laity. Constant training improves performance. At the same time, it is important to hold up **mission as a parish priority**. If it is never mentioned, no one will believe it is important. One church *asked participants of mission trips to wear their team shirts to church on the Sunday after returning home. They were always recognized and thanked for their work.* The most surprising thing I have learned as a bishop is the actual resistance which can be expected when trying to grow a congregation. It is naïve and dangerous to underestimate the power of established leadership. There are forces in place in every parish to protect the status quo. One should anticipate and prepare for opposition.

**SIGNS OF RESISTANCE IN A CONGREGATION TO MISSIONAL THINKING** [is this section VI or something new? Suddenly we go from sentences to fragments—almost like notes for a talk]

“a lot of things have been bothering me lately”  
disagreement with way leaders have done things

urging research of past policies  
strong disapproval of certain actions  
threats of non support  
Diminished Power and Influence  
Dashed Expectations  
Feeling of being used  
Jealousy

Sense of worthlessness  
Burn out  
Interpersonal conflict  
Limitations of giftedness  
Weakened Physical health  
Feeling out of the loop  
Rejection

### **How NOT to Respond**

Don't ignore them  
Don't triangulate  
Don't become judgmental  
Don't give unfair attributions  
Don't ignore the situation  
Don't overreact

Don't be in a hurry  
Don't violate personal values  
Don't make promises you may regret  
Avoid impulsiveness  
Don't take their reactions personally  
Don't unfairly penalize them

### **WHAT TO DO?**

1. Anticipate the Emergence of troubled leaders
2. Administratively prepare for troubled leaders
3. Teach and hold up biblical model of the Body of Christ
4. Be Pastoral and Available
5. Be patient
6. Give them a voice
7. Don't deal with the content issues
8. Deal with the real problem
9. Help them discover new ministry opportunities
10. Celebrate your leaders
11. Offer and attend training opportunities for conflict management
- 12 Pray for your leaders.

**Innovative leadership is essential** to growing churches - that church growth follows prayerful vision and creative planning - that it is possible for churches to grow in declining areas with poor demographics and scarce resources. The style of worship or the theology of the congregation was not the deciding factor in church growth. The Church Growth Movement is closely identified with conservative evangelical theology or with the Charismatic Renewal. **It is possible to grow congregations that are identified as conservative, evangelical, liberal, catholic, traditional, low church, or broad church.**

### **The Importance of Prayer - Partner with the Holy Spirit**

- Discernment of where to plant churches Guidance in raising up leaders
- God's provision of resources God's gifts of courage and patience

### **Basics of Church Planting**

- [why is this list here rather than earlier? Where is it explained?]
- Evangelism
- Education
- Worship
- Gift Based Ministry
- Small Group Ministry
- Discovering the Neighborhood
- Personal Sacrifice
- Coaching
- Flexibility
- Outreach

**A Strategic Concept from the Diocese of Virginia: IROM  
Intentional Responsiveness to Opportunities for Mission**

- Cast a bold vision and then wait for openings.
- Challenge and then pray.
- Encourage and then let go.

**VISION PRECEDES PROVISION**

“It takes an eight-figure vision to attract a seven-figure gift.” [This is obviously a note that needs explanation]

**Parallel Fronts of Church Planting**

1. Praying for God's Vision
2. Refining the Vision – Strategic Planning
3. Communicating a Bold Vision
4. Creating Opportunities for Generosity
5. Recruiting Entrepreneurial Evangelistic Leaders
6. Planning the New Congregation
7. Finding Land
8. Coaching and Supervision
9. Managing the Process
10. Evaluation

**The vision must...**

- be reflected in diocesan program offerings
- be reflected in diocesan priorities.
- be passionately embraced on the local level.
- be communicated to generous people.
- be biblically based
- come from constant prayer and discernment.