



Policy on Vital, Sustainable and Strategic Parish Ministry (December, 2009)

Introduction

Our diocesan vision is “Growing Communities of Faith in Jesus Christ to Serve God’s Mission in the World.” The church stewards God’s intentions for the world, participating and partnering with what God is about.

How do we achieve this mission? In practical terms, we accomplish this primarily through the work of parish ministry, either as individual parishes or in partnership with others.

The elements of parish ministry are:¹

- to provide services of worship,
- to provide for pastoral care,
- to provide opportunities to participate in the Mission of God,
- to re-connect to the spiritual and physical needs of the community,
- to provide a ministry of education ,
- to provide for the proper stewardship of the parish and the property,
- and to practice partnership.

Policy on Vital, Sustainable and Strategic Parishes

The Diocese of New Westminster is committed to vital and sustainable parish ministry.²

***Vitality** is defined as the qualitative aspects of parish and congregational life, viewing parish ministry from the standpoint of missional objectives, the purpose of our existence as a church.*

¹ Appendix A: A fuller description of these elements adapted from the Diocesan Strategic paper adopted at the 108th session of the Synod of the Diocese of New Westminster, May 2009.

² Appendix B: A fuller description of these elements adapted from the Diocesan Strategic paper adopted at the 108th session of the Synod of the Diocese of New Westminster, May 2009.



Sustainability is defined as quantitative aspects of what is necessary for parish and congregational life, viewing parish ministry from a stewardship approach with adequate financial, facility, and leadership assets.

Vitality and Sustainability are both necessary. Missional objectives must include appropriate assets, for without the necessary numbers, ministry is not sustainable. The asset approach must include missional objectives, for without a mission the parish will perish. Parishes that are lacking either vitality or sustainability are at a crossroads, and action must be taken to achieve the missing elements. Parishes that are lacking both are at risk. Decisions must be made about the future.

Strategic Parishes, or Missions may often be a matter of geography, history or ethnicity. Where there is no other Anglican presence providing worship and outreach this may be a strategic location. In situations where there is another viable Anglican center of worship within a reasonable distance, parishes are not likely to be considered strategic.

Although new ministries in strategic locations often receive initial funding to get them established, once rooted, each ministry must become vital and sustainable. Where there may be special challenges, creative options will be explored to make the ministry both vital and sustainable. This may mean meeting outside of a church building, or shared ordained leadership. Strategic congregations, historical or ethnic, will be honoured in appropriate ways. They may not be sustainable in the current physical plant, but may require an alternative model and/or location.

The Ministry Assessment Process³ (MAP) is the primary strategic planning tool in the diocese for guiding parishes in discerning their future ministry and how best to use resources, including property and buildings for this ministry. The overall goal is vital and sustainable ministry throughout this diocese – not merely survival. Maintaining the status quo in the diocese is not an option and any framework for change must be understood as a spiritual activity, taken in prayer, worship and openness to the Holy Spirit. The process for change needs to provide the opportunity for all members of the parishes to participate in discernment and make recommendations about future mission and ministry. The most effective use of the MAP is done within a region, recognizing that ministry is not limited to parish boundaries.

The Parish Mission Review⁴ (PMR) is to be undertaken with an external facilitator within each parish of the diocese. This review will assist parishes and the bishop make informed and responsible strategic decisions about future ministry and appropriate resource allocation, both within the parish, the region and the diocese as a whole. The review instrument will continue to be adapted by the Ministry and Congregational Development Committee (MCDC) with the implementation schedule to be determined by the regional archdeacons in consultation with MCDC. It is to be used either as a tool

³ Appendix C: A fuller description of the Ministry Assessment Process adapted from the Diocesan Strategic paper adopted at the 108th session of the Synod of the Diocese of New Westminster, May 2009.

⁴ Appendix D: The Parish Mission Review is current as of Oct 14, 2009 and is subject to continuing refinement.



within the MAP or as a review prior to the MAP to assist parishes and regions in preparing for and initiating the MAP.

Effective Evangelism is the effective sharing of the good news of God in Jesus Christ by word and action, inviting others into God's reconciling work in the world and is the call of every Christian, congregation and parish. Growth through evangelism can be seen in the depth of spiritual practice and in numbers. Numbers are a by-product, not the aim of effective evangelism. Evangelism in a missional context is meeting people where they are, hearing their stories, naming the sacred and offering healing, meaning, and community through salvation in Christ.



Policy on Vital, Sustainable and Strategic Parish Ministry

Appendix A: Elements of Parish Ministry

Parishes and congregations are communities of baptized persons who worship God, proclaim the Gospel, administer the sacraments, nurture their members, and reach out in witness and service to their neighbours, and the world.⁵

The following are characteristics and benchmarks of parish ministry, and are the work of the clergy and laity working together.

1. Provide services of worship at which the Word of God is preached and sacraments are celebrated in accordance with the order and discipline of the Anglican tradition, including:

- ordained leadership, appointed by the bishop
- significant lay participation

2. Provide for pastoral care, including:

- arranging for the regular visitation of the sick and shut-ins, and arranging for regular administration of the sacraments
- arranging for ministry in times of emergency
- encouraging lay participation in these ministries, and arranging for the appropriate training

3. Provide opportunities to participate in the Mission of God in the community surrounding the church, and to the wider community, including

- providing opportunities for individuals to develop personal skills to witness to, and develop the faith that is within them
- practicing genuine hospitality to all who visit the parish facility, whether for worship or programs
- studying the demographics of the surrounding community to increase the sensitivity to the needs and backgrounds of persons living and working in the area
- providing opportunities for the integration of new attendees into the life and service of the parish

4. Re-connection to the spiritual and physical needs of the community, including:

- making connections with and responding to the community to determine areas of service and need
- making the parish facility accessible to all persons with physical limitations

⁵ Criteria for Viable Congregations, ELCA Sierra Pacific Synod. (we acknowledge our indebtedness to this work)



- working with community partners to meet the needs of others in the community

5. Provide a ministry of education to equip people for their spiritual growth and to serve God in the world, including:

- providing regular opportunities for the study of scripture and other topics
- providing programs that relate to the lives and special needs of parishioners, e.g. baptismal classes, confirmation, marriage, new members etc.
- providing leadership education to train and programs of support for people to serve in the parish, the diocese, and the community

6. Provide for the proper stewardship of the parish and the property, including:

- providing stewardship education and regular opportunities to challenge all parishioners to fulfill their calling as stewards of all God has given, including financial contributions to the parish and mission
- maintaining the facility, to provide an attractive setting for worship, and the other activities of the parish
- maintaining appropriate financial record keeping, made accessible to the congregation and the diocese

7. Practice partnership as a member of the diocese, deanery and archdeaconry, including:

- electing and sending members to synod
- participating in diocesan worship, events and programs intended to strengthen the life of the congregation and church
- maintaining diocesan assessment and interpreting such to the congregation as a ministry of the people of God
- working with the neighbouring Anglican parishes in providing opportunities to collectively support parish life and outreach into the community



Policy on Vital, Sustainable and Strategic Parish Ministry

Appendix B: Vital and Sustainable Parish Ministry

The Diocese of New Westminster is committed to vital and sustainable parish ministry.

Vitality has to do with the qualitative aspects of parish and congregational life. This is a view which approaches parish ministry from the standpoint of missional objectives, the purpose of our existence as a church.

Sustainability has to do with the quantitative aspects of what is necessary for parish and congregational life. It has to do with an organizational view which views parish ministry from a statistical approach such as numbers in the pews and dollars in the plate.

It is not a matter of either/or but both/and. The missional approach must include appropriate numbers, for without the necessary numbers, ministry is not sustainable. The organizational model also must include missional objectives, for without a mission the parish will perish. Parishes that are lacking either vitality or sustainability are at a crossroads, and must take action to achieve the missing elements. Parishes that are lacking both are at risk. Decisions must be made about their future.

Vital and Sustainable Ministry:⁶

A parish or grouping of parishes may be deemed to be ‘**vital**’ when it has these characteristics:

- The activities of the parish ministry make a discernable difference in the lives of individual parishioners and in lives in the community which it serves. Lives are being transformed.
- The parish is mission-focused, paying attention to the needs of the surrounding community. It asks, “What is our purpose as church in this place and time?” and responds to where God is calling.
- The parish is equipped for the work of change and renewal, and invites others on the journey.
- The parish priorities are outward looking, and in line with diocesan priorities.

A parish or grouping of parishes may be deemed to be ‘**sustainable**’ when it has, and is able to maintain, the following:

⁶ Acknowledgement to the Diocese of Toronto, Policy on Sustainable and Strategic Ministry.



- Lay leadership – a group with the skills and resources necessary to manage actively the property and programs of the parish, with enough critical mass (numbers and energy) to allow for rotation and rest.
- Ordained leadership – at least one full-time stipendiary priest with adequate time and skill to provide the pastoral, sacramental, and liturgical leadership necessary. In certain situations rural parishes may involve a part-time or shared ministry. This may also be true in smaller urban parishes working together in mission, but never maintenance. Clergy supply or interim is not adequate parish ministry beyond a transitional period. Where deacons are part of the ordained ministry team they provide an important and integral role in ministry.
- Vision and resources to meet the needs of the community the parish serves. This includes the people to deliver the ministry and outreach.
- A sound financial situation – primarily through the free will offering of the congregants. Additional income may come from endowments and rental, but usually must be supplementary to giving. If a mortgage or debt exists, it is being paid down in a predictable and acceptable rate.
- Sufficient income to pay the expenses of the priest, engage in intentional mission and outreach, and maintain its buildings in good condition.
- Does not deplete its capital reserves or capital assets for operating costs.

In order for parishes and congregations to make a difference in their own lives and the lives of those they touch they need to be **both** vital and sustainable. It is also important to acknowledge that parish ministry can be defined as a stand-alone parish or congregation, or a parish or congregation working together in a relationship with other parishes, congregations and ecumenical partners. By forming a grouping, parishes may find a model for reaching vitality and sustainability.



Policy on Vital, Sustainable and Strategic Parish Ministry

Appendix C: The Ministry Assessment Process (MAP)

The Ministry Assessment Process (MAP) is a strategic planning process. It guides parishes in discerning how they are called to current and future ministry and how best to use their resources, including property and buildings for this ministry. Developed by the Physical Resources Task Force, MAP was shaped by the input from two rounds of diocesan-wide consultations, adopted by an overwhelming majority at Synod 2007, and is based on the following principles:

- The overall goal is vital and sustainable ministry throughout this diocese – not merely survival. Maintaining the status quo in the diocese is not an option.
- Church structures are not permanent. They participate in the reality of change in order to have and give life.
- Decisions on the best use and allocation of our church structures and other resources require that we first discern how we are called to mission and ministry
- Any framework for change must be understood as a spiritual activity, taken in prayer, worship and openness to the Holy Spirit.
- The process for change needs to provide the opportunity for all members of the parish to participate in discernment and make recommendations about future mission and ministry.
- As a diocese we uphold partnership: we strive never to do alone what we can do in partnership.

Through MAP, parishes engage in a detailed examination of their values, their passions, their mission, as well as their facilities, property and other resources. They are also encouraged to engage and partner with the surrounding community to address local needs (including social justice, cultural and spiritual). MAP provides the opportunity for parishes to bridge their values and passions with the Diocesan Strategic Priorities, transforming them into action at the parish, regional and diocesan level. In this way MAP has become an integral part of the Diocesan Strategic Plan. More information on MAP and the various MAP tools can be found on the Diocesan website.⁷

MAP Implementation

Since its inception in the fall of 2007, many parishes have entered MAP, with a majority being regional in nature. It is expected that by 2013 all parishes that are in the diocese will have participated in MAP, most as part of a regional MAP and some as individual initiatives. Part of the learning of the initial pilot phase, especially as it happened at a time of incredible economic change, is that not all MAPs are the same. The process must be made applicable to where the parish and region is at, the resources available, and the issues that need to be addressed.

⁷ Diocese of New Westminster website: vancouver.anglican.ca



As the Parish Mission Reviews identify that a particular parish is neither vital nor sustainable, a special time sensitive process is envisioned to assist the parish in dealing with the options being faced.

It is also anticipated that as MAP is a continuing planning process, a second round of MAP initiatives will be undertaken in the second half of Plan 2018.

Observations to Date:

- MAP is an effective planning process, but like any where the future direction is on the line it takes time and energy. It cannot be artificially hurried – though it is important to encourage those who are lagging.
- It is important to respect the time it takes to often change the culture in the parish or region for MAP to work – particularly where there are hard decisions.
- MAP parishes are discovering the excitement, energy and joy that come from working in partnership with other parishes and groups to offer ministries, programs and activities that they could not do on their own.
- As parishes start to address opportunities and challenges they need parameters/criteria for exploring redevelopment opportunities, negotiating contracts and making decisions around personnel affected by change
- Parishes and regions should also have support/expertise in examining and considering new models of ministry and ways of being church, including ways of connecting with the communities around them, to support them in looking beyond and taking risks.
- Undertaking MAP requires a significant amount of energy. In certain cases parishes do not have the required energy, and it may be a sign that the life cycle of the parish is ending.
- Entering MAP is not to be seen as a way of avoiding hard decisions or surviving a little longer. It is a chance for parishes and ministries to reassess their strengths and to build on them to be centres of vital and sustainable ministry.



Appendix D: Parish Mission Review

Mission

Diocese of New Westminster 2009

	Vision for Ministry	Missional Focus	Equipping for Ministry	Discipleship	Persons Served in Mission	Average Weekly Attendance
Attribute Description	<i>Established vision and priorities for ministry with a doable plan for action</i>	<i>Response to the needs / hopes of the surrounding community and the parish; in partnership with other churches and community groups or agencies</i>	<i>Practices and opportunities offered to nurture & sustain spiritual growth and service in a changing world</i>	<i>The degree to which the parish nurtures discipleship of Christ</i>	<i>Trend in the number of persons served in mission relative to the size of the worshipping congregation</i>	<i>Trend in average attendance at services on Sunday and during the week over the last 5 years</i>
Ideal	A well defined outward looking vision for ministry with specific, concrete missional objectives, shared throughout the parish and widely understood	Well-supported, active ministry initiatives that impact on the quality of life in the parish and surrounding community; lives are being transformed.	Continuing opportunities offered and well attended to support parishioners and others in their spiritual journey and ministries	A community of disciples following Jesus, fed by deep engagement in scripture, learning and prayer in a life of worship, fellowship and outreach.	Significant increase (+25%) over last 5 years in the ratio of persons served, excluding rental or commercial groups with no ministry connection	Significant increase (+15%) over last 5 years in attendance.
Scoring: 9	Meets ideal	Meets ideal	Meets ideal	Meets ideal	Meets ideal	Meets ideal
6	Mostly meets defined or in process but needs work to make it doable; or in place but not widely understood.	Some outward focus Limited missional ministry with modest impact in the surrounding community and in the parish	Periodic opportunities for study and other programs. Good participation and connection with service and spiritual growth.	Either a community without a missional focus or a missional focus without community; the elements are present but not connected	Some increase (10-24%) over 5 years.	Some increase (6 to 14%) over 5 years
3	Some elements Some rudimentary notion; vision needs considerable work to make it doable	Mission is primarily focused on self-preservation; very limited outreach; minimal impact on the communities	Limited opportunity for study and programs; same few participate; little connection with service or spiritual growth	Significant challenges in one or more of the elements of the ideal.	Minimal growth over 5 years (<10%)	Minimal growth (1 to 5%) over five years
0	Little evidence	Inward focus; outreach non-existent or totally focused on self-preserv.	Little or no opportunity for study and programs	Any of the elements of the ideal missing.	No growth or decline	Attendance has been in decline over last 5 years
Input Score						



	Stewardship Education	Sources of Income	Operating Expenses	Reliance on Other Funds
<i>Attribute Description</i>	<i>Degree to which parish encourages members to be holistic stewards</i>	<i>Trend and degree to which operating and missional funding comes from parishioner giving</i>	<i>The allocation of operating expenses for program and outreach / missional objectives</i>	<i>Requirement to deficit finance, deplete capital, obtain loans or grants for general operations</i>
Ideal	Intentional year round stewardship and legacy planning, with financial campaign	75%+ of funding comes from parishioner free will offerings, and the percentage has not declined in five years	40% of operational budget to program and outreach / missional objectives	Not required during last 5 years
Scoring: 9	Meets ideal	Meets ideal	Meets ideal	Meets ideal
6	Intentional year round stewardship with campaign but without legacy planning	60-74% of funding comes from parishioner free will offerings, and the percentage has not declined in five years	25 – 39% of operational budget to program and outreach / missional objectives	Required once in last 5 years
3	Financial campaign without intentional stewardship education	50-59% of funding comes from parishioner free will offerings, and / or has declined in the past five years	10 – 24 % of operational budget to program and outreach / missional objectives	Required 2 or 3 times in last 5 years
0	Little or no stewardship	< than 50 % of funding comes from parishioner free will offerings, and / or has declined in the past five years	< 10% of operational budget to program and outreach / missional objectives	Required more than 3 times in last 5 years
Input Score				



	Stewardship of Facilities	Condition of Facilities	Adequate Space and Facilities	Visibility, Accessibility and Parking
<i>Attribute Description</i>	<i>Degree to which it is good stewardship to use the current facilities to serve the missional objectives of the Church</i>	<i>Quality of buildings and property, including environmental considerations</i>	<i>Capacity of facilities and space to meet current worship and program needs as well as projected programs and worship or future ministry opportunities.</i>	<i>Geographical visibility of church property, signage, lighting, accessibility to property and building, available parking and landscaping.</i>
Ideal	Physical resources are appropriate to and utilized for the mission of the Church.	New or major renovations in last 10 years and/or well maintained with no major work expected for next 10 years	Facilities are well structured for current worship and program needs, with sufficient space. Facilities are also adaptable with enough space for future programs and ministry opportunities.	Church facility is highly visible, well lit at night, easily accessible both for entering the property and getting around in the building, good signage, sufficient parking spaces available, and attractive landscaping.
Scoring: 9	Buildings serve the mission	Meets ideal	Meets ideal	Meets ideal
6	Keeping current facilities is best current option	Well maintained, but will need work in next 10 years	Facilities adequate for current needs and meet current building codes. May need some alteration for future programs and ministries	Has most but not all of the noted elements
3	Not good long term stewardship, but temporary only option.	Maintenance work needed and major work due or overdue	Facilities are barely adequate for present needs; and / or rented and unavailable for mission.	Has only a few of the elements
0	Building inhibits the mission.	Obvious problems such as leaks, wood rot, hazardous areas etc.	Facilities are inadequate for present and future	Has none or very few of the elements
Input score				



<i>Attribute Description</i>	Lay Leadership	Clergy Leadership	Leadership Development	Shared Leadership
Attribute Description	<i>Laity committed and empowered to lead / manage in ministries and administration of parish</i>	<i>Clergy Leadership committed and empowered to lead / manage in ministries of the parish</i>	<i>The scope and nature of lay leadership development in the parish</i>	<i>Degree to which the lay and ordained leadership work as a team.</i>
Ideal	Pool of trained laity available and committed to lead in the ministries and administration with sufficient numbers to avoid burnout	Sufficient and appropriate clergy (individual or team) gifted, well skilled and committed to the mission of the parish and diocese	Current lay leadership are engaged in their own development and the next generation are being prepared	A fully functioning team that allows for leadership roles that are particular and complementary.
Scoring: 9	Meets ideal	Meets ideal	Meets ideal	Meets ideal
6	Enough trained laity available and committed to lead in ministries and administration	Committed, trained clergy, but not enough resource allocation	Little formal development of current leadership but with the a focus on development of future leaders.	An integrated team with some missing skills
3	Some difficulty in finding enough lay people to fill all jobs	May have enough but not right people.	No formal development of current leadership and no development of future leaders	A team with significant skill gaps and is not integrated
0	Unable to find lay people to fill all jobs	Clergy supply or both of the negatives of above	No leadership development	A lack of team or a history of unresolved conflict
Input score				

