

2016 Strategic Plan
Episcopal Diocese of Dallas



Preamble from the Strategic Planning Committee

Following his installation, Bishop George Sumner began the patient and diligent discernment process of evaluating where he might most effectively lead the Diocese of Dallas. In his first six months, he met with and listened to a wide range of constituents as he visited various congregations to gauge the pulse of the Diocese. This process allowed Bishop Sumner to formulate a series of strategic priorities that he believed essential to the evolution and growth of the Diocese over the next five years.

While good and valuable, Bishop Sumner realized that priorities will never be reached, nor goals achieved if a structured plan is not created. In that spirit, Bishop Sumner called Mother Betsy Randall to chair a Strategic Planning Committee. This focus group was then given the task of crafting a plan that would create a comprehensive framework to make the vision a reality. Over the last nine months, the Strategic Planning Committee has met with and listened to numerous groups and key leaders, both lay and clergy, and has studied a wide range of matters. Most importantly, the Strategic Planning Committee has prayerfully undertaken the task before them, remaining open to being led where God calls us, as a Diocese.

What the Strategic Planning Committee learned through listening and prayerful consideration is that this Diocese must unite and determine – as a Body – what direction to take. We are no longer in a position to be successful and impactful in God’s Kingdom without everyone committing to the process. Without all voices contributing to and impacting the vision of the Diocese, there is little likelihood of achieving our maximum potential. The sum of our parts is unquestionably greater as a whole. In that spirit, the Strategic Planning Committee sets forth a series of initiatives. It then leaves the details of fulfilment to a wider range of participants – believing that inclusion and collaboration will lead to successful implementation.

While the following are lofty and bold goals, all recognize that they will only be achieved through dedicated and diligent implementation. The Strategic Planning Committee has identified key projects that it believes God has called us to consider in the coming years. It has also taken the time to educate itself and the Diocesan leadership on a process to ensure accountability and results for these projects. The most important and unique aspect of this Strategic Plan is that, while it casts a key vision into the future, it provides sufficient flexibility in the details of each project for those who will be tasked with implementing them – allowing global, communal participation from more than just a select few. This system is

one that we all, together, can utilize to do our individual and collective work and the ministry of Christ in the years to come.

Bishop's Summary Introduction

Let me begin by saying that I am so humbled by God's placing me in this time and space. I wish to start by expressing my gratitude and appreciation to the Strategic Planning Committee and, most especially, Mother Betsy Randall for her transformational leadership. And, might I add, "Amen" to the flexible and yet firm approach to our Diocesan vision.

The proposed plan is more of a commitment and a call to action. I believe it deeply attends to and asks what we all wonder: amid our circumstances, what is God calling and opening for us in ministry as our way forward in mission. This Plan has space for all and stumbling blocks for none. We have diligently, patiently listened to the Diocese both in listening sessions and a cultural survey. We heard the response in a resounding tone. There is an immense desire for collegiality and transparency. We must broaden the circle of those involved in growing the Kingdom. The Committee and I believe this Plan will allow us to achieve these necessary steps.

I hope that the Diocese recognizes that this is a lay-oriented and congregationally-driven plan. There are no top-down edicts, nor a paternalistic approach to worship and ministry. Every unique voice should be given both the space and the ability to go as God calls. Our hope is that every ministry group,

every congregation will passionately and prayerfully renew its evangelical purpose in the world. We must each go where we are called to help, serve, and minister the Gospel.

I also wish to make clear that dutiful discipleship requires us to be mindful of a Christian responsibility to consider the future. We are called to pass the faith from generation to generation. We must teach. We must form. We must grow. And we must also ensure that our leadership – both lay and clergy – must be thoroughly oriented into a diverse community that focuses not simply on 2016 or 2017, but where Jesus’s life and ministry can be found in 2027.

I believe that you will see a Plan fully dedicated to fulfilling our most urgent and yet long-term goals. We will renew our efforts to expand into “church planting” the next place of worship for the unchurched – fulfilling Christ’s message to create disciples. We will engage in active, consistent social outreach and cross-collaboration with other faith-based ministries because, while unique, there is far more that unites those in God’s Kingdom than divides them. We will place a renewed focus on ordaining young priests who are fiercely dedicated to proclaiming the Gospel. To do this, as our Lord said, we must “count the cost.” We intend to do so.

Most importantly, we submit all of these hopes, dreams, and goals into God's unconditionally loving hands in humility, confidence, and expectation that He shall lead us where we are called to go.

We are equipping one another to reach our communities with the transformative Gospel of Jesus Christ. Amen.

+George Sumner

The Episcopal Diocese of Dallas,

2016 Strategic Plan

To our brothers and sisters, made in God's image and charged with proclaiming the Good News of God through Jesus Christ, we say in one voice:

Let us equip one another to reach our communities with the transforming Gospel of Jesus Christ!

We know that God has placed us, as Christ's disciples, at a historic moment. Our Diocese sits at the epicenter of the fastest growing Metroplex in North Texas, becoming larger and more diverse each day. We stand surrounded by great wealth and resources, as well as tremendous poverty and desperation. We see the numbers of those in need increasing faster than society's ability to care for them. And, it is clear that cultural shifts have eroded or alienated many from the Church.

In our work together, we will model to all what true Episcopalian Christianity can be. We will be Gospel Christians. We will be missionary Christians. We will serve as witnesses in response to Christ's call. To ensure our future, we will begin to make strategic investments for the next generations of Episcopalians. As we do these things, we cannot forget the mandate given all of today's Christians in North Texas – to seek and to serve Christ in all persons, and to love our neighbors as ourselves.

The purpose of our 2016 Strategic Plan is to cast a vision for where we are called to serve God and Christ in the world. It is to set forth a bold and striking vision of carrying Christ's unceasing and unwavering ministry into an ever-changing and ever-evolving world. Serving Christ and His Kingdom will be challenging and require precise focus, bringing ourselves and those who do not yet know Him towards a glorious life's journey with Jesus Christ. We cast our net far and wide – aware of our responsibility as Christians, as thoughtful participants in the larger Episcopal Church, as citizens of our communities, as members of a global Anglican Communion. Yet, to that end, each of us has a special role to play in our individual and collective witness. The vision, as we move forward, is to have a thriving Diocese, ministering through the work and leadership of its congregations. We will have accomplished that vision when we reach two measurable goals:

1. Add 3,000 people to our Diocesan-wide average Sunday attendance level (which was 10,936 in 2015) and
2. In a future Cultural Landscape Survey, the Overall Satisfaction for the Diocese measure will have increased from the 35th percentile in 2016 to the 50th percentile.

Where Are We Now?

Over 15 years ago, the Diocese of Dallas sought a strategic path toward God's future, and it has achieved a tremendous level of success in lighting the path toward a resurrected Lord. We seek to do the same, having learned lessons of where we gave great glory, where we fell short, and always being cognizant of the call that stands before us to press forward in an ever-present world. God's work stands before us.

As a Diocese, our numbers remain strong; the Episcopal Diocese of Dallas is thriving. There are 66 worshipping congregations in the Diocese. We have 250 active clergy. Our collective Sunday attendance averages almost 11,000. We have 32,000 baptized members attending our congregations. Congregations received 26.7 million dollars in pledge and plate donations. All of this affords the Diocese the ability to plant churches and grow ministries in a way that few dioceses can. We are collectively reaching out in the world to witness to the Kingdom.

The present and rapidly developing future before us presents a tremendous opportunity for expansion. Our Diocese comprises 17,500 square miles with over five million people in our population, with a realistic expectation that the number could rise to six million in the next decade. We are, literally, the fastest growing Metroplex in the United States. This includes not only growth in the urban and

suburban areas, but meaningful expansion in our rural areas as well. There is a wealth of financial resources available in our geographic area, with the unusual reality that over 50% of the area's households are classified as middle class or upper class, giving us tremendous resources. The demographics also indicate a younger generation taking hold of the region. The population is rapidly becoming more ethnically diverse, witnessed by the fact that in just our Diocese, on a weekly basis, God's children worship together in seven different languages.

Yet, we also know from census data that nearly 44% of Texans adhere to no religion, obligating us to do our part in bringing these people to the resurrecting power of Jesus Christ. The diversity within our Diocesan geography presents major opportunities and requires calculated judgment to effectuate our ministry with the available resources.

Some of the recent work in this Strategic Plan required us to have a frank evaluation of our culture that affords us the ability to honestly evaluate who we are, what we feel, and where we desire to go forward as one Diocese, united in its purpose and call. Based on facts gathered and voices heard, we learned the following:

- We know that, at present, we appear to be a Diocese with three separate contexts – urban congregations, suburban congregations, and rural

congregations. There is a challenge in utilizing the unique gifts of each area while not allowing some to be overshadowed, ignored nor secluded. We must remember that we are one family, not three. We are called to live in the one Body of Jesus Christ and should renew our lives together.

- We know that our lay people are talented and are looking for someone to provide them with resources and training to go out and do the ministry work God calls them to perform.
- We know that our clergy often feel isolated and have a deep desire for greater collegiality. At a recent clergy conference, the Bishop stressed that clergy should get to know and rely upon their colleagues at the three parishes closest to them. Collaboration will breed great synergy, which will in turn spark innovation and growth. We can and should draw upon the gifts of others, while providing key opportunities for clergy development.
- We know that there is a great desire for the Diocese to provide assistance to struggling congregations. Not only should the Diocese extend a helping hand - we should all remember our obligations to assist our brothers and sisters.
- We know that we have Diocesan leadership who are willing to be creative and flexible in both casting a new vision and reaching our potential. We plan to continue our rich tradition of church planting, including new

techniques to broaden our reach. Innovative, outside-the-box thinking should become the norm in this Diocese, not the exception.

- We know the work of those in ethnic congregations is part of the larger church. There should be no misunderstanding: these congregants are the Church, not a sub-ministry of it. We are all one in the brotherhood and sisterhood of Christ. There exists amazing potential for Gospel enculturation and ecumenical partnerships throughout our region. Bilingual clergy and culture must be an area of serious consideration in the years ahead.
- We know there is a strong belief that leadership – both lay and clergy – should be diversified so that we can carry the light of Christ to the world. We must grow the next generation of church leadership and diversify the power of decision-making and positions in our Diocese and congregations. Our work shall not be borne by a few but shared by all. Transparency is, likewise, critical to ensure an informed Diocese that is unified in its work and ministry.

Challenges and Opportunities

Along these lines, our collective self-reflection has led us to identify some cultural impediments that could impair our ability to answer the call before us and the Diocese. We must be mindful of these matters as we set forth on our path.

Leadership. At a congregational level, there must be a concerted effort to help clergy be missional and transformational. We need to facilitate and implement a system that fosters clergy accountability for the growth and decline of their congregations in a measurable manner through mutual ministry reviews at the congregational level and with the Diocese.

Strategic Initiatives before a Plan. Enthusiasm and a desire to do the work are admirable. That said, before embarking on a plan of action, it is critical for leadership to be strategic in thought, vision, planning, and expenditures before undertaking significant initiatives. Are we truly listening to the constituents in a manner that allows purposeful response? Additionally, how are we ensuring that we are investing for results-based initiatives (i.e. investing for impact)?

Diocesan Governance. We need to be cognizant that there is a wide swath of talent throughout the Diocese and work on bringing a larger number of diverse leaders into the work of the Diocese. Transparency in the decision-making processes and their outcomes is essential. Good governance requires committees to do their work and deliver their conclusions for implementation, not simply accepting the decision of a few.

Struggling Congregations. The Diocese will equip congregations by providing access to online resources such as Christian education curricula, strategic

planning materials, demographic data and local experts. A strategic support team will be formed to assist those congregations willing to create a plan. Congregational development support will be available as needed through consultants. These measures are intended to shift the current diocesan culture of isolated congregations to one of life-giving relationships which enable our diocese to be congregation-led.

Lack of Collaboration. There currently exists a culture of isolationism that, often times, can lead to congregational decline and stagnation. Diocesan clergy dynamics are likewise isolated and rooted in their congregational life. Clergy and lay leaders do not rely upon each other to collaborate in a frequent and beneficial manner. We will eliminate this pattern and outlook.

Mission Field as a Guide for Potential. Strategic planning cannot be done without proper investigation of surrounding demographics and community. We need to analyze the available mission field for a given congregation to understand the potential for growth and development. In this context, critical thought should be given to reaching and welcoming the next generations

Dollars and Fundraising. The Strategic Plan will require significant capital and operating expense.

Where do we go from here?

Our mission is clear: We will equip one another to reach our communities with the transforming Gospel of Jesus Christ. We will accomplish this mission by equipping congregations, developing vocational callings, impacting our communities through witnessing and serving our neighbors.

CONGREGATIONS:

Encouraging congregations to grow by providing resources to disciple, strategize, and collaborate.

The Diocese will foster a new culture of lay empowerment in our congregations to be positioned to fulfill their call and duties. Collectively, we will live and serve as a theological witness of Christ's saving grace. Examples of planned methods to achieve this objective include the following:

1. **Create Christian Formation Curricula.** The Diocese is conscious of its obligation to gather and disseminate programs and materials for those throughout the Diocese. The Diocese will gather, translate, organize and communicate written documentation to assist congregations. This will include standardized training materials in various areas of adult Christian Education.

2. **Encourage Strategic Thought.** The team dedicated to Strategic Thought will create a one page strategic plan template available to all parishes. Congregations will be encouraged to create a strategic plan by the end of 2018, using a checklist of basic information for leaders to consider when planning their congregation's future. Some examples include formulation of mission/vision, youth and children's ministry commitments, university ministry, community and global partnerships, analysis of growth/declination trends, evaluation of physical plant facilities, stewardship, mission field data usage, "best practice" audit items, etc. Each congregation should review its strategic plan on an annual basis to evaluate its performance.
3. **Promote Collaboration.** It is critical to encourage congregations to partner with one another and to establish outreach models and build upon and replicate the successes of our brothers and sisters. This means providing space for those to provide witness of successes and failures – all in an effort to reach our individual and collective potential. The goal would be for there to be independent, direct collaboration between those within the Diocese, as opposed to everything being generated or coordinated by the Diocese, itself. The Diocese intends to help foster collaboration between congregations and clergy. The stated goals would be to help develop and advance innovative techniques used by those in the Diocese, to help establish leadership on "best

practices,” and to provide mentorship to other leaders and congregations in times of need.

4. **Create and Maintain Online Resources.** There is wide-spread recognition that there is a growing need to foster an online database of materials. This includes practical evangelism and “how to grow.” It includes gaining information from subject-matter experts on everything from stewardship, to Christian Formation, to facilities or any number of church-matters. The Diocese will also provide demographic data so that congregations can carefully study who they are, where they stand, and where/how they can grow. We will learn, together, how to serve those in distress in a collaborative and successful manner. Beyond that, we will acknowledge that unique and specific Latino ministry materials will be created and provided; it is no longer acceptable to simply believe that translation of English to Spanish is sufficient to meet the needs of our Latino brothers and sisters.

CALLINGS:

**Recruiting, teaching, and developing
transformational lay and ordained leadership.**

1. **Clergy Vocation and Recruitment.** The Diocese will critically analyze its recruitment process of clergy in the coming years. A concerted effort will be made from the Diocese to raise up young, evangelistically-minded, curates. The diverse ethnic and cultural needs of the Diocese will require recruitment of specific clergy with unique skill sets to understand the cultural, linguistic, and generational differences we present.
2. **Clergy Development and Mentoring.** There is a strong corollary to the health of a congregation and the vitality of its clergy. Strong efforts will be made to create regular clergy interaction at Diocesan conferences. Mentorship programs will be created to assist younger clergy and newly relocated clergy. A collaborative fostering of ideas will benefit the entire Diocese and breathe new, invigorating life into the clergy body that will overflow and spread an inspiring work into our congregations.
3. **Create Order of Lay Evangelists.** The Diocese will enhance the training and ability of those called to evangelize, by creating and training an Order of Lay Evangelists. A standardized process to utilize the talents of these individuals is critical to carrying the Church's message out into the world.
4. **Create Order of Lay Catechists.** Much like Lay Evangelists, we will establish and equip those called to teach discipleship to those around them.

Curriculum will be created and training given to those called to this ministry, principally through classes and resources at the Stanton Center.

5. **Restructure Stanton Center.** The Stanton Center will be restructured to afford greater use of its many resources. The Diocese will bring in rotating clergy to write and create curriculum that will help contribute to the Diocese and the larger Communion. The Center will offer a diverse curriculum for lay leaders and clergy. Classes will be offered in East Texas. A version of existing Spanish-immersion education will be made available through the Center.

**COMMUNITIES:
Reaching our communities as we
proclaim the Good News, plant churches, and
serve those in both suffering and need.**

1. **Congregational Support of Outreach Ministries to Serve Those in Need.**

We will be mindful that much work and ministry occurs outside of the walls and confines of our churches. We will create a database that affords outreach opportunities across this Diocese. We will find more ways to welcome the stranger, as we do with Gateway of Grace. We can do more to feed the hungry – including undertaking new and aggressive efforts with the Hunger Initiative and Fresh Produce Ministry. It is our moral responsibility to partner with schools in effort to bring Christian teaching to the next generation, as we do with One Church, One School. In short, we will help

congregations build on their successes and find ways to engage in ecumenical partnerships to grow with all Christians – both locally, through a concerted effort with coalition of South Dallas ecumenical leaders, and throughout the Global Church.

2. **Proclaim the Good News.** The Diocese will encourage every congregation and its members to have an understanding about how to live out the great commission. We are ambassadors for Jesus Christ! The diocese will offer workshops and training in the areas of personal evangelism, apologetics, and parish evangelism. This offering will equip the faithful to witness, to engage in conversation about important questions of the faith and to reach the surrounding community with the transforming Gospel of Jesus Christ.
3. **Plant New Churches.** The Diocese will continue to plant new churches in areas of rapidly growing population. Additionally, the Diocese will work with congregations to encourage and equip them to plant new missional outposts such as multi-sites and demographically targeted services.
4. **Develop Latino Strategic Vision.** The demographic trends make it clear that we must develop a deliberate, structured strategy that will afford us the opportunity to reach the influx of Latino members coming to and living in North and East Texas. As the fastest growing demographic, we will devise an approach that recognizes the needs of this demographic and best

practices. This includes planting of new congregations, coordination and teaching of stewardship responsibilities, and fostering of partnerships between congregations.

5. **Develop Rural Church Strategic Vision.** The rural congregations of this Diocese are indispensable to spreading the Gospel message. Too often, we hear these groups are left to feel isolated, unsupported, and unattended to in their ministry. Yet, these congregations represent potentially the most collaborative and collegial portions of the Diocese. There is much to be learned and gained from Rural Churches. There is also much that will need to be done to understand and meet the needs of those outside the direct urban and suburban areas, including strategic growth efforts than can occur with proper resources and Diocesan assistance.

6. **Re-energize Camp All Saints.** There will be thoughtful analysis of Camp All Saints and its future. Our vision is that Camp All Saints will be a place of excellence in the formation of the young people in and around the Diocese, including an evangelism opportunity for those attending from public schools who utilize the Camp for environmental study. The Diocese will formulate a Commission to study the Camp and formulate a plan for its short and long term future. This includes a method to ensure the summer ministry of our Diocesan children and consider the effective nature of our

ability to spread the Gospel on young people year-round. The study of the Commission will also focus on realistic, needed capital improvements to make Camp All Saints the leading Christian camp in North Texas, as well as a plan for increased self-sufficiency in operations by 2021.

A Call to Action

To effectuate the goals that God has set before us, it will be necessary for us to work collaboratively, foster leadership and carry forward Christ's call to evangelism. Additionally, there is a clear need for the Diocese and its congregations to arrange for the finances necessary to meet the plan that stands before us.

1. **Investing for Impact.** The Diocese is mindful of the mountainous work of ministry that stands before us to be done and the limited resources available. This requires thoughtful discernment on where God is calling us and how we can get there with the glorious gifts the Lord provides for us. Therefore, the Diocese intends to invest for impact – being calculated with its personnel and funding to target initiatives with both a likelihood of success and impact. This will require the Diocese to review and evaluate the costs and benefits of its assets and operations.
2. **Capital Campaign and Partnership.** Much of the work and witness outlined will require some form of a capital campaign and financial

assistance to complete successfully. The Diocese intends to reach out to strategic partners to help create, facilitate and manage a targeted capital campaign. Included in this Initiative will be partnership efforts, designed to allow those throughout the Diocese to come together to fund a select few initiatives. The Episcopal Foundation will be a key partner, ally and advisor in this regard.

3. **Planned Giving.** Throughout this Diocese, we must make a concerted effort to engage with each and every member to understand estate planning and planned giving so that all of us are cognizant of carry forward the call to stewardship of our resources when we join Christ in the House of the LORD. More than we know, our congregants want to see that those behind them are provided the resources to afford others the ability to learn from and lead others to Christ's redeeming love and redemption.

Concluding Thoughts

God has placed us here at a momentous time and place. We are in the fastest growing Metroplex in North America, an increasingly diverse community. We are surrounded by remarkable wealth and poverty. As Episcopalians we are part of a denomination which has known conflict, as well as demographic challenge in its clergy and congregations. It is "the best of times, the worst of times" – young

adults from other denominations drawn to the riches of our tradition, even as we seem uncertain of their own identity and produce few resources to convey it.

“For such a time as this,” to quote the book of Esther, Christ is calling for three things from us. First we are to share in modeling what Episcopalian Christianity truly is. We are Gospel Christians. Scripture tells us Jesus died so we can live lives forgiven and free, and that He extends the resurrection promise of eternal life to us. We make an unapologetic profession of what CS Lewis called 'mere Christianity.' We are catholic and apostolic Christians, part of an ancient and worldwide fellowship in 'spirit and truth.' We are missionary Christians, each person and congregation formed and sent to share that new life where we are. As heirs of the Anglican heritage we do all this in a generous spirit, open to dialogue. Striving to be, by God's grace, such a diocese is first of all for the eternal good of our own people. But Christ calls forth this clear witness on behalf of the larger Church as well.

Secondly, God is calling us to make deposits and investments for the future. A new generation of scholar priests will produce resources for forming young people and adults in the faith. We will encourage and train a new generation of younger clergy. An order of lay catechists and evangelists will retrieve and expand our sense of ministry. We will be a leader in the planting and rebooting of

parishes, and this will in turn encourage all our congregations to be mission outposts.

As we do these things, thirdly, we cannot forget the mandate given all of today's Christians in North Texas – to seek and serve Christ in all persons and to love our neighbor as ourselves. We will reach out to young people who live in poverty. We will do our part to welcome the stranger, in the spirit of Matthew 25. We will grow in our ability to nurture and expand our Ethnic congregations.

In this time and place, God gives us a calling larger and more momentous than just tending our own affairs: modeling Episcopal Christianity/ making a unique investment in the future/ serving North Texas of 2016. We are called to work together in new and innovative ways as we share the God's unchanging Truth. Let us equip one another to reach our communities with the transforming Gospel of Jesus Christ. "See now is the acceptable time!"

Yours in Christ our Lord,

Rt. Rev. George R. Sumner