

2006 MISSION SURVEY REPORT

**Bishop's Commission on Mission Strategy
Episcopal Diocese of Minnesota**

January 2007

Prepared by the Baseline Assessment Action Team:

The Rev. Dwight Zscheile, *St. Matthew's, St. Paul*
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CONTENTS:

Executive Summary.....	1
Introduction.....	3
Method.....	4
Findings.....	4
Summary Observations for Further Reflection.....	15
Appendix 1: Copy of the Survey.....	17
Appendix 2: Respondent Characteristics.....	25
Appendix 3: Open-Ended Comments.....	26

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During October and November of 2006, 787 lay and clergy leaders in the Diocese of Minnesota were surveyed on their mission practices, beliefs about mission, and their views of the state of the diocese. Key findings include:

- Visiting the sick and serving the poor are the most common mission practices among leaders in the Diocese of Minnesota. Participating in mission trips and visiting prisoners are the least common.
- Most leaders in the diocese rarely share their faith story with non-believers. A majority (63%) did so twice or less in the past year, and only 9% did so more than ten times.
- 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.
- Most leaders in the diocese rarely mentor or develop other church leaders. 62% did so fewer than three times in the past year, and only a quarter did so more than five times.
- Both clergy and lay leaders want to partner in ministry, but many lack awareness of their spiritual gifts. A large majority (82%) believe the clergy's primary role is equipping the laity for ministry, and a third ranked "Equipping the church's members for ministry in daily life" as one of the two most important mission priorities. Yet only a slight majority of leaders know what the biblical spiritual gifts are and which they have been given. While nearly three-fourths said the church had helped them understand their ministry talents, less than a third of respondents said they were using their ministry talents "very much."
- When asked how confident they were to proclaim the Good News, 40% said that they were no more than somewhat confident, and only a quarter said they were very confident.
- Creating an inclusive community, equipping the church's members for ministry in daily life and preaching the good news of God's gracious rule over the whole of human life received the highest average scores as understandings of the church's mission. However, when asked to choose the two most central mission emphases, the greatest number of respondents (42%) chose bringing people into a life-transforming relationship with Jesus as Lord, followed by creating an inclusive community (36%).
- Respondents want greater partnership between congregations and the diocese. Four out of five want congregations and the diocese to be mutual partners in mission, but a majority (57%) see congregations currently primarily serving the diocese, and only 11% see the

diocese as primarily serving congregations. Respondents see a similar relationship between congregations, the diocese and the national church.

- Personal faith and discipleship and the life of local congregations are generally seen as vital. The life and ministry of the Diocese of Minnesota and the national Episcopal Church are seen as significantly less vital.
- When asked how hopeful they were about the future of the Episcopal Church in Minnesota, respondents were ambivalent: 57% said they were fairly or very hopeful, but 43% said that they were no more than somewhat hopeful. Hopefulness is based in congregational vitality, the mission history of the diocese and the leading of the Holy Spirit.
- When asked what would be lost if the Episcopal Church in Minnesota were to disappear, respondents most often named the church's rich liturgical and musical expression of the Christian story, its ministry to and with Native Americans, its role as a place for seekers, doubters and progressives to explore their faith questions and its role as a welcoming church community for members of marginalized groups, such as gays and lesbians.
- Respondents' free answer comments suggested that there is considerable interest in returning to the church's roots through a fresh focus on the Bible, Jesus and the Holy Spirit.
- Respondents' comments suggest a strong need for organizational adaptation and change, as well as for fresh strategies for mission and church growth. However, the diocese's track record of implementing growth strategies generates little hope for the future.
- There is recurrent criticism of diocesan and clergy leadership, structures and financial practices. Many respondents want a more collaborative, transparent and empowering relationship among the bishop, diocesan staff, clergy and congregations.
- The comments reflect a perceived culture of mistrust and division within the diocese. This culture is seen as significantly impeding the mission of the Episcopal Church in Minnesota.

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INTRODUCTION

The Bishop's Commission on Mission Strategy (BCMS) process calls for a Baseline Assessment Action Team to: "develop and conduct several on-line surveys of the leadership of the congregations of the diocese. The purpose will be to identify a base-line of where perceptions and commitments are as this work begins, and engage in assessment of what changes appear to be taking place over time."

Accordingly, this survey was designed to measure behaviors, attitudes and beliefs among leaders about the mission of the Episcopal Church in Minnesota at the beginning of the BCMS process. The survey sought to do the following:

- Identify which mission practices leaders engage in and their frequency.
- Ascertain how aware leaders are of their ministry talents and specifically of the biblical spiritual gifts.
- Assess confidence levels in proclaiming the gospel in a pluralist society.
- Identify which mission priorities and values are most strongly held.
- Find out how leaders perceive the relationships and roles of clergy and laity, congregations and the diocese, and congregations, the diocese and the national church.
- Discover what leaders perceive to be the greatest mission challenges facing our church.
- Measure levels of hopefulness for the Episcopal Church's future in Minnesota and the sources of that hopefulness.
- Provide an opportunity for leaders to share their thoughts and comments about mission and the Episcopal Church in Minnesota anonymously.

This report will be presented and discussed by the BCMS as a whole in February 2007 and made publicly available through the diocesan website. Copies will be provided to the bishop, diocesan staff, Council and Trustees. In addition, news reports of summary findings will be distributed through diocesan media. Our hope is that these findings will be discussed widely within the diocese.

The BCMS process design includes a follow-up survey to be conducted in fall 2007 to measure changes in behaviors, attitudes and beliefs about mission among leaders in the diocese as a result of the process.

METHOD

The Baseline Assessment Team developed a preliminary set of questions to gauge mission-related attitudes and practices. After several reviews and pilot testing, the survey was conducted during October and November, 2006 among 1,238 individuals identified as lay and clergy church leaders by the diocesan office. The survey was conducted primarily via the Web through SurveyMonkey.com. Eight hundred and twenty three individuals with e-mail addresses listed in diocesan records were sent an e-mail and asked to complete the survey on the Web. A printed form of the survey was mailed to 415 individuals without e-mail addresses. Additionally, printed copies were available during diocesan convention. Responses were received from 787, for a response rate of 63.6%. Since many of the addresses the team was given to work with turned out not to be current, the response rate among those whom we reached was considerably higher.

Characteristics of the respondents included:

- Respondents were weighted more toward the Twin Cities metro area than greater Minnesota (63% vs. 37%) and fairly evenly split between churches smaller than 100 and larger (47% vs. 53%). A slight majority (55%) have been in the diocese 20+ years.
- Almost three-fourths of respondents were lay people not employed by the church.
- 131 priests and 38 vocational deacons responded.
- The ages of respondents were most heavily concentrated in the 50s and 60s. Fewer than 30% were younger than 50.
- 55% of the respondents were female, 45% male.
- 94% of the respondents were white, with American Indian (3%) and Black/African American (2.6%) the largest minority groups.

A more complete summary of the respondent characteristics is included as Appendix 2 and a copy of the questionnaire is Appendix 1.

FINDINGS

Mission Practices

Respondents were asked to say how frequently they had engaged in a variety of mission practices in the previous year.

- The most common mission practices of leaders in the diocese were visiting the sick, serving the poor or needy through an outreach ministry, reaching out to a neighbor in need and leading an activity of a ministry team.
- Participation in local or non-local mission trips and visiting prisoners were the rarest, with more than 80% of respondents never having done these things in the past year.
- It is noteworthy that more than a full quarter of respondents never shared their faith story with a non-believer in the past year, and only 36% did this 1-2 times.
- While public advocacy is spoken of by many in the diocese as a strong mission value, a majority did this either not at all (35%) or only 1-2 times in the past year (24%).
- Mentoring or developing other church leaders is an infrequent practice, with 38% of leaders not engaging in this activity at all in the past year.

Frequency of Mission Activities in the Past Year	Never	1-2 times	3 to 4	5 to 10	>10
Visited a sick person.	10.2%	21.6%	22.0%	16.2%	29.9%
Served the poor or needy through an outreach ministry.	12.7%	23.5%	21.7%	15.7%	26.4%
Personally reached out to a neighbor in need.	10.4%	30.1%	30.8%	13.5%	15.2%
Led an activity of a ministry team.	30.6%	19.0%	10.8%	11.9%	27.8%
Publicly advocated against injustice or oppression.	35.0%	23.8%	16.3%	11.3%	13.6%
Invited a friend to church.	16.7%	44.0%	23.7%	10.5%	5.1%
Mentored or developed other ministry leaders in your church.	37.8%	23.6%	14.3%	9.6%	14.7%
Shared your faith story with a non-believer.	27.2%	36.2%	17.7%	9.8%	9.2%
Participated in a local cross-cultural mission trip.	80.0%	14.5%	3.3%	0.7%	1.6%
Visited someone in prison.	86.2%	7.0%	2.4%	2.0%	2.5%
Participated in a non-local cross-cultural mission trip.	84.9%	11.5%	1.7%	1.0%	0.8%

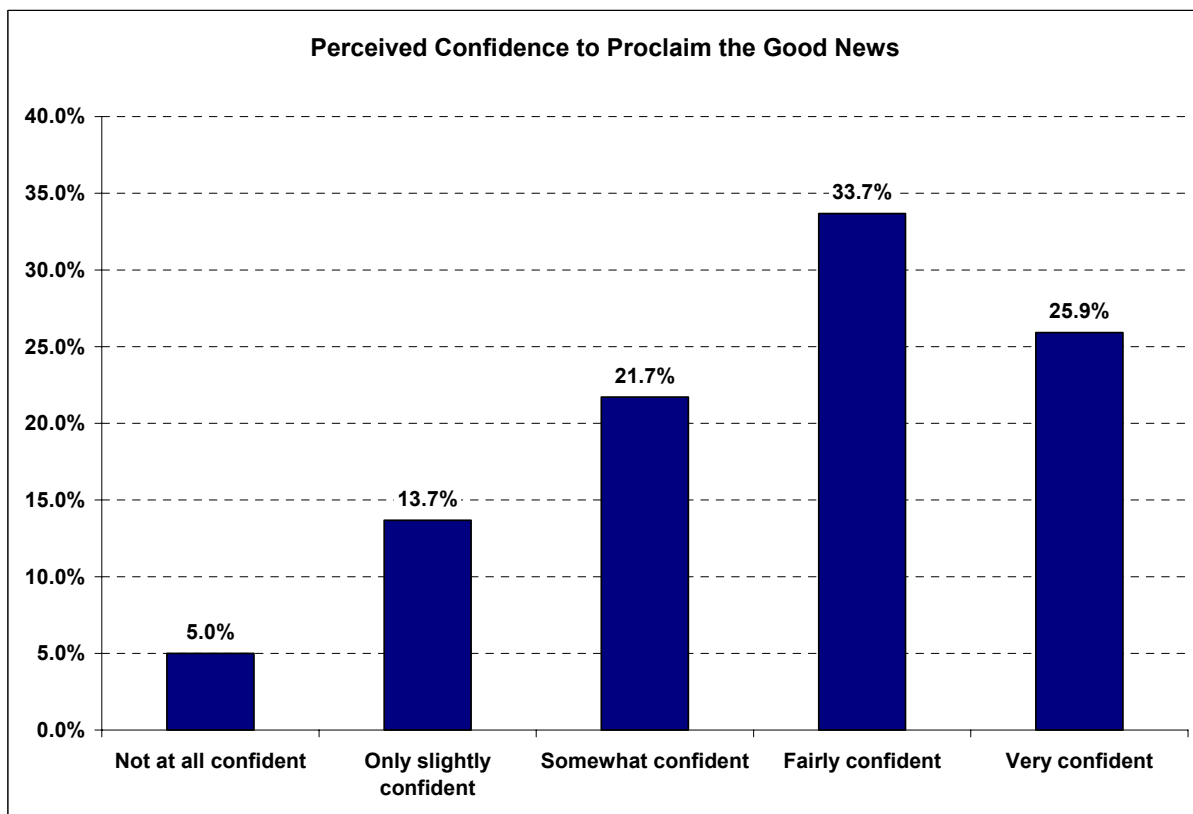
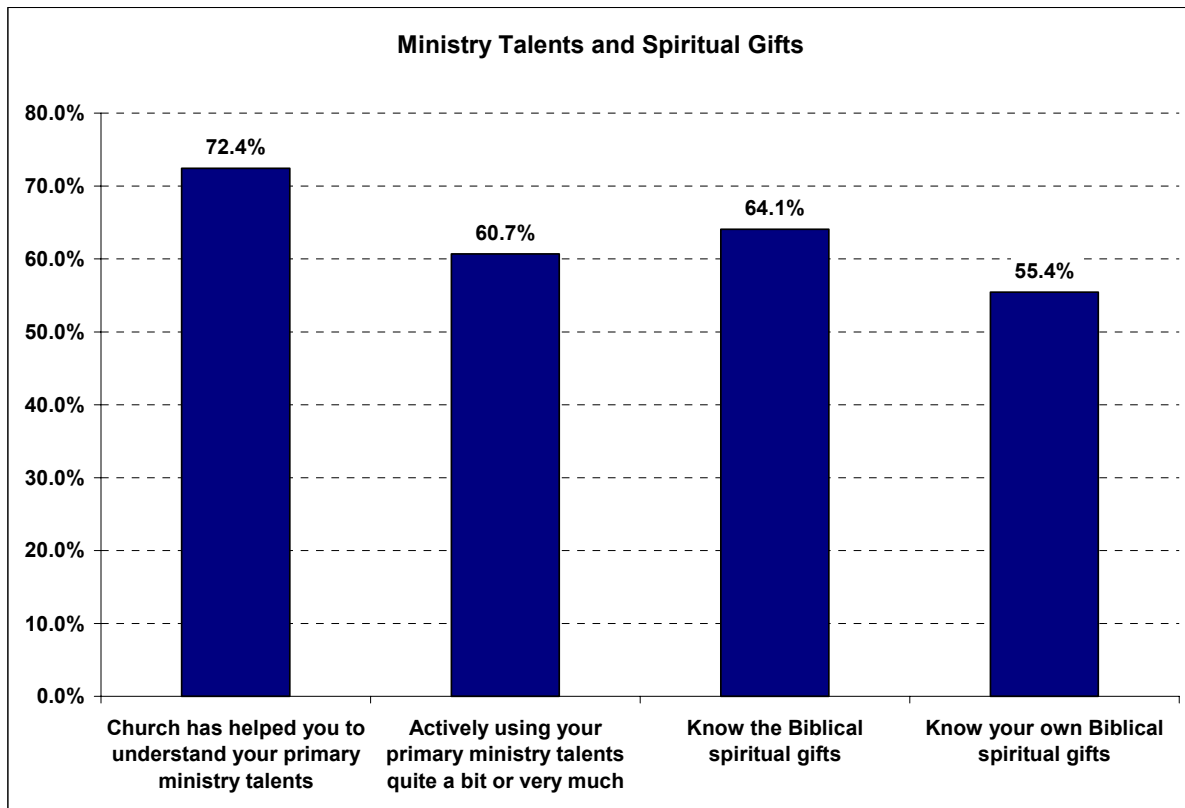
The items in the mission practices section were summed to form a mission practice scale, measuring the extent to which individuals engaged in all the mission practices. The subgroup differences section of this report summarizes the characteristics of those who were higher or lower in their practice of mission.

Talents and Spiritual Gifts

Another set of questions asked respondents about their ministry talents and the biblical spiritual gifts.

- While 72% of respondents said that the church had helped them discern their ministry talents, 33% said that they were using those talents "quite a bit" and only 28% said they were using those talents "very much" (on a 5 point scale from "not at all" to "very much").
- A substantial number of respondents (45%) don't know what the biblical spiritual gifts are.
- Only slightly more than half (55%) know what biblical spiritual gifts they have been given.

When asked how confident they were to "Proclaim the Good News of God in Christ," 55% said they were somewhat or fairly confident, but only 26% said they were very confident.



Understandings of Mission

Moving from questions about behavior to those about beliefs, the survey asked respondents first to rate on a 1 to 10 scale the importance of several mission goals, and then to choose the two goals they felt were the most central. The ratings give us a sense of the importance of ideal mission goals unconstrained by the need to prioritize, while the choice reveals priorities.

Accordingly, a majority of respondents assigned the highest ratings (9 or 10) to 7 of the 9 items, indicating a desire for an expansive and multi-faceted mission for the church. Creating an inclusive community, equipping the church's members for ministry in daily life and preaching the good news of God's gracious rule over the whole of human life received the highest average scores as understandings of the church's mission. However, when asked to choose the two most central mission emphases, the greatest number of respondents (42%) chose bringing people into a life-transforming relationship with Jesus as Lord, followed by creating an inclusive community (36%).

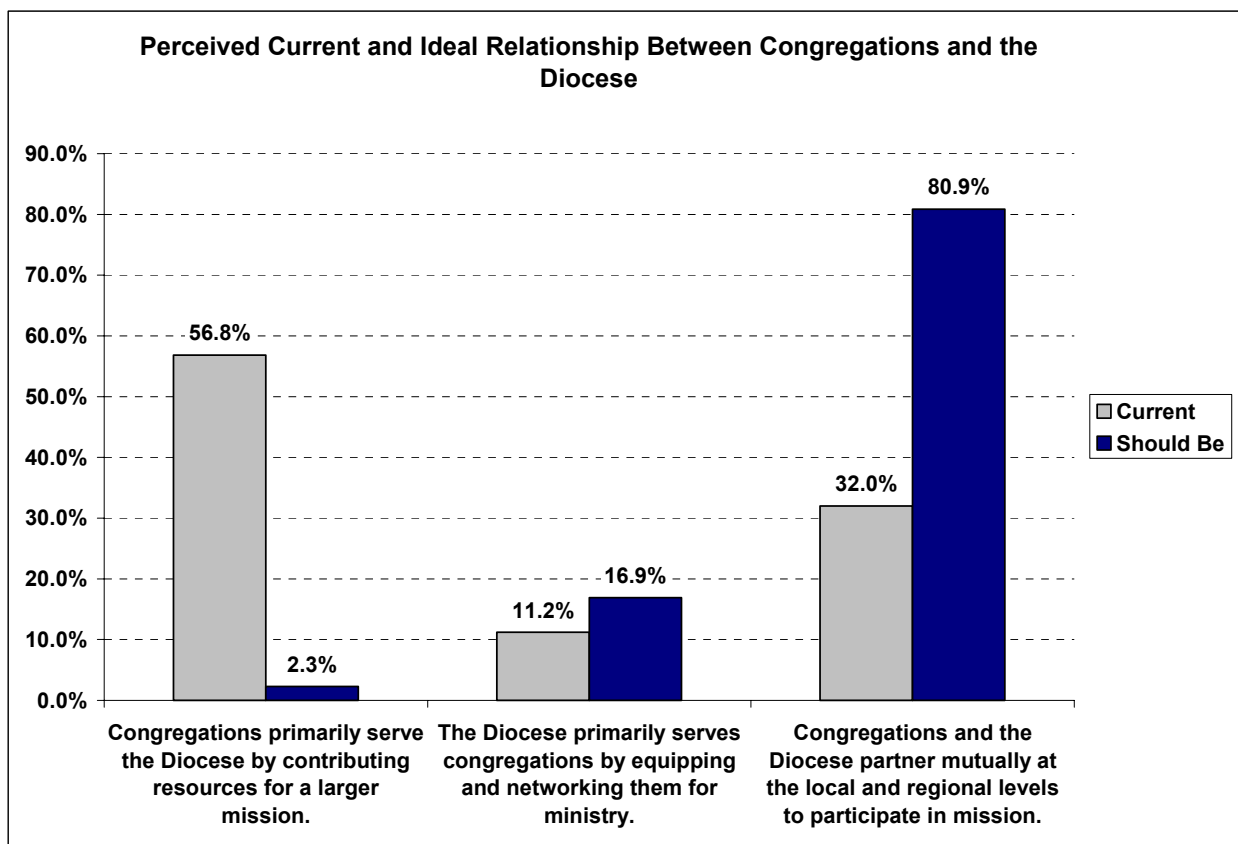
The two items that received the highest scores from only a minority were "Building and supporting educational, social service and community institutions" (something that the diocese has arguably done very well), and "Healing the sick." The latter goals received the highest ratings from only about a third and were chosen as one of the top two by only 6% and 2%, respectively.

Importance of Mission Goals (Rated on a 1 to 10 Scale)	Rating a 9 or 10	Mean	Choosing as one of two most important
Creating an inclusive community in which there are no outcasts.	73.6%	8.91	36.3%
Equipping the church's members for ministry in daily life.	67.6%	8.77	33.0%
Preaching the good news of God's gracious rule over the whole of human life.	66.4%	8.64	24.0%
Advocating for the poor, marginalized and oppressed.	59.8%	8.46	17.9%
Fostering reconciliation within individuals, families, the community and the world.	55.9%	8.38	17.6%
Meeting people's spiritual needs in today's competitive religious marketplace.	52.2%	8.14	19.1%
Bringing people into a life-transforming relationship with Jesus as Savior and Lord.	57.4%	8.07	42.3%
Building and supporting educational social service and other community service institutions.	31.1%	7.18	6.4%
Healing the sick.	34.1%	7.17	1.7%

Perceptions of the Church's Organization and Vitality

The survey asked what should be the relationship between clergy and laity, and then what is and what should be the relationship between congregations and the diocese, and between the diocese and the national church.

- There was considerable agreement with regard to the relationship between the clergy and lay people: 82% believed that the clergy’s primary role should be equipping lay people for ministry in daily life, as opposed to having clergy exercise the primary ministry of the church and lay people primarily supporting that ministry.
- On the question of the role of congregations vis-à-vis the diocese, there was a major misalignment between what people perceive to be the current reality and what they think it should be. A majority (57%) believe that congregations currently primarily serve the diocese by contributing resources for a larger mission. However, an overwhelming 81% believe that congregations and the diocese should instead partner mutually.
- Similarly, 85% currently see congregations and the diocese primarily supporting the national church’s mission, but 61% believe that the national church should instead primarily serve the local mission of congregations and the regional mission of the diocese.



Respondents were asked to rate the vitality of their personal faith, their congregation, the diocese, and the national church.

- Respondents' own personal faith and discipleship were rated highest, with 63% choosing “very vital.”
- Congregational vitality was also rated fairly high, with 46% rating it as "very vital."
- However, vitality scores for the diocese and the national Episcopal Church were much lower, with 35% rating the diocese and 30% rating the national church as "not at all" or "not very" vital.

Perceived Vitality	Not vital at all	Not very vital	Somewhat vital	Very vital
My personal faith and discipleship	0.3%	3.4%	33.3%	63.0%
The life and ministry of my congregation	1.6%	10.9%	41.1%	46.3%
The life and ministry of Episcopal Church (USA)	5.6%	24.3%	49.7%	20.3%
The life and ministry of Diocese of Minnesota	7.0%	28.4%	48.5%	16.2%

Another set of questions asked respondents how much they agreed or disagreed with statements about the current state of the Episcopal Church in Minnesota and the challenges facing it.

- Majority opinion recognized a strong need for organizational adaptation and change. Majorities agreed that “Our society is changing rapidly and the church must adapt in order to survive and thrive” (78%), “We lack strategies and methods for growing our churches” (71%), “The Episcopal Church needs to do a better job of meeting its members’ needs” (55%), and “Political and theological battles at the national level have damaged our public image” (54%).
- However, majorities rejected a need to change the church’s basic theological commitments. Most disagreed with the statements “We are too traditional in our theology to speak to contemporary people” (75%), “Our form of church has lost its relevance and cannot compete with other religious and secular attractions” (72%), “We have diluted the gospel and compromised the message of Christ” (64%) and “Our theological identity is too vague for us to be bold in mission (52%).”

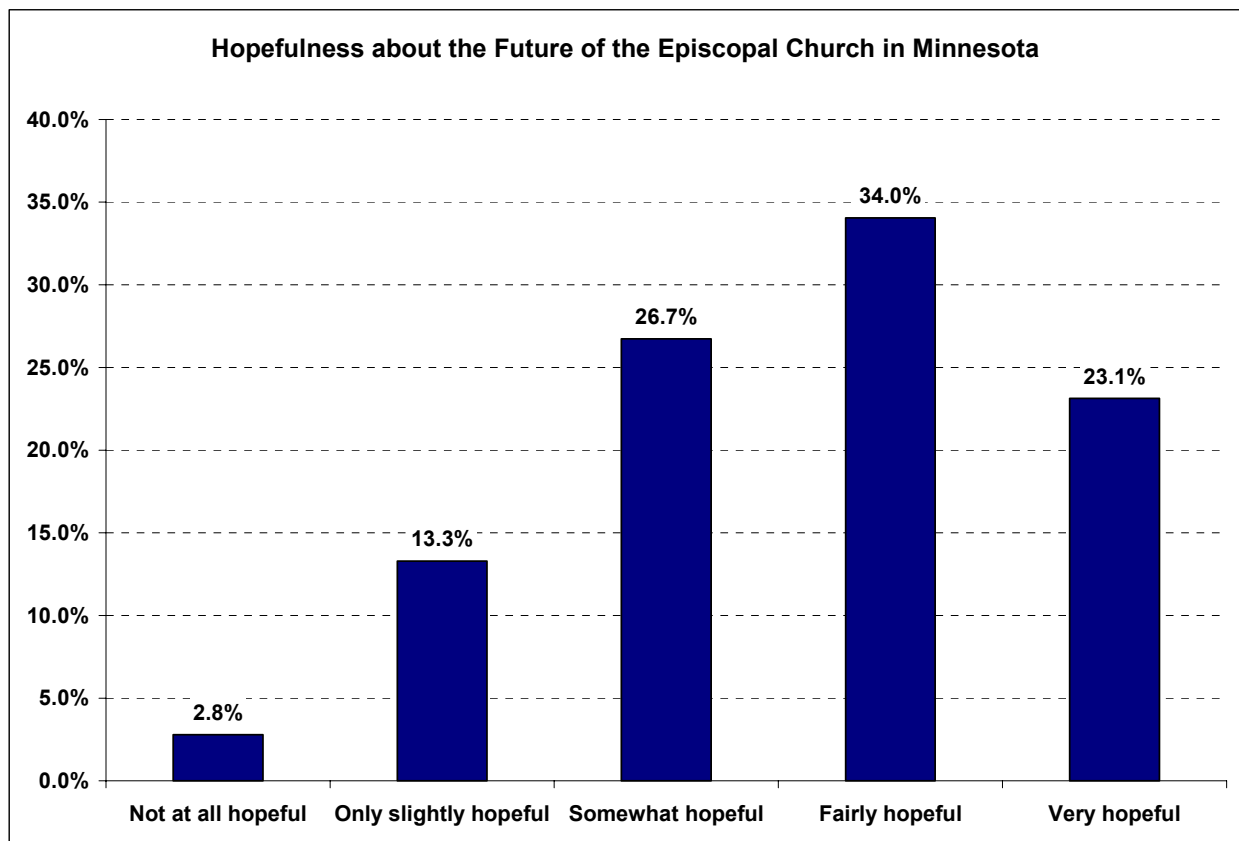
Perceived Mission Challenges	Response				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Our society is changing rapidly and the church must adapt in order to survive and thrive.	3.6%	6.8%	11.8%	43.9%	33.8%
We lack strategies and methods for growing our churches.	1.7%	13.5%	13.4%	44.3%	27.1%
Political and theological battles at the national level have damaged our public image.	4.9%	21.6%	18.8%	35.6%	19.2%
The Episcopal Church needs to do a better job of meeting its members’ needs.	1.7%	10.2%	34.2%	43.4%	10.5%
Our institutional image is too elitist and exclusive to attract diverse populations.	10.9%	34.2%	20.6%	29.6%	4.8%
Our theological identity is too vague for us to be bold in mission.	17.2%	35.4%	19.2%	20.6%	7.6%
We have diluted the gospel and compromised the message of Christ.	29.1%	34.7%	14.0%	12.1%	10.1%
Our form of church has lost its relevance and cannot compete with other religious and secular attractions.	25.7%	46.4%	12.3%	11.9%	3.7%
We are too traditional in our theology to speak to contemporary people.	25.5%	49.3%	14.6%	8.6%	2.0%

These questions were followed by a free answer question on what is the single greatest challenge facing the diocese, answers to which are summarized in the section on open-ended comments.

Looking to the Future

The questionnaire asked a series of questions about the future of the Episcopal Church in Minnesota: a general question about how hopeful the respondent is, ratings of sources of hope, perceptions of what would be lost if there were no Episcopal presence in Minnesota, and, finally, a solicitation of free answer comments about the current and future mission of the Episcopal Church in Minnesota.

- Respondents were ambivalent in their feelings of hope for the church: 57% said they were fairly or very hopeful, but 43% said that they were no more than somewhat hopeful.
- The things that give people greatest hope are: “The vitality of my local congregation,” “Our mission history of advocacy on behalf of oppressed people,” and “Signs of the active leading of the Holy Spirit in our midst.”
- Most did not find much hope in “Our record of implementing new strategies and techniques for church growth.”



Sources of Hope About the Future of the MN Episcopal Church	None	Only a Little	Some	Quite a Bit	A Great Deal
The vitality of my local congregation	3.5%	11.2%	21.4%	36.1%	27.7%
Our mission history of advocacy on behalf of oppressed people	3.4%	10.7%	32.1%	35.7%	18.1%
Signs of the active leading of the Holy Spirit in our midst	4.1%	10.0%	34.0%	35.5%	16.5%
Our mission history of church planting in the early years	13.6%	24.3%	34.5%	20.1%	7.6%
The leadership of the Diocese	13.6%	24.8%	34.2%	22.1%	5.2%
Our record of implementing new strategies and techniques for church growth	23.9%	32.8%	28.5%	11.1%	3.7%

As a way of understanding what church leaders felt to be the unique attributes of the Episcopal church, the survey asked what would be lost if the Episcopal Church in Minnesota disappeared.

- The highest level of agreement (87%) was with “a rich liturgical, musical and artistic telling of God’s story.”
- This was followed by diminishment of ministry to and with Native Americans, the loss of a place for seekers, doubters and progressives to explore their faith questions, and the loss of a welcoming church community for members of marginalized groups, such as gays and lesbians (all 71-72%).
- The lowest level of agreement (36%) was with “Many members of the burgeoning immigrant populations in our midst would not find a church home.”

What Would be Lost if the Episcopal Church in MN Disappeared?	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Minnesota would lose a rich liturgical musical and artistic telling of God’s story	1.2%	3.2%	9.0%	42.1%	44.5%
Ministry to and with the Native Americans would be significantly diminished	2.0%	7.8%	17.8%	42.1%	30.3%
Many seekers doubters and progressives would not have a place to explore their faith questions	2.8%	12.3%	14.7%	41.7%	28.5%
Many members of marginalized groups such as gays and lesbians would not find a welcoming church community	4.7%	11.3%	12.7%	41.1%	30.2%
Without our unique expression of the gospel some people would not hear the gospel at all	5.4%	14.5%	18.1%	41.3%	20.7%
The poor and needy in our state would not be as well served	2.7%	16.6%	23.7%	44.7%	12.3%
Many members of the burgeoning immigrant populations in our midst would not find a church home	5.1%	25.3%	33.4%	27.5%	8.7%

Open-Ended Comments

There were two open-ended questions in the survey, the first asking about the greatest challenge facing the diocese and the second about the future of mission in the diocese. Including both

questions, the survey elicited nearly a thousand comments, with 78% responding to the challenge question, and 48% responding to the future question. Given this high response rate, the comments warrant careful attention and we urge readers to read all the verbatim comments listed in Appendix 3.

The comments were coded into twelve categories as follows, using the same coding scheme for both questions. The most frequent category of comment to both questions was one we have labeled "Go back to basics," the common themes of which include a renewed focus on the Bible, Jesus and the Holy Spirit and affirming an orthodox Anglican theological identity over liberalism (15% and 22%). The second most frequent category of comments concerned the leadership from the diocese and from clergy (12% and 15%). In third and fourth place were comments about the need for church planting and growth (12% and 8%) and the challenge of irrelevance to the unchurched (13% and 6%).

Free-Answer Comments about the Greatest Challenge and the Future Mission for the Episcopal Church in MN	Challenge N=614	Future N =380
Go back to basics. Renewed focus on Bible, Jesus, Holy Spirit; orthodox Anglican theological identity over liberalism	15.0%	22.3%
Poor diocesan and clergy leadership, structures and financial practices	12.1%	15.0%
Need for church planting and church growth techniques and strategies	12.0%	7.8%
Challenge of irrelevance to the unchurched and our own youth	13.0%	5.9%
Internal conflict, mistrust, fear and division	8.8%	7.0%
Need greater communication/marketing/getting word out about the Episcopal Church	9.0%	6.4%
Equipping members to respond to needs in our communities and share their faith	8.2%	4.8%
Affirm tolerant, liberal theology (inclusion of GLBT in particular), even if unpopular	4.3%	8.3%
Need for greater focus on rural and small congregations	4.0%	8.6%
Challenge of changing demographics and declining membership	6.8%	1.1%
Finances and giving	1.7%	0.8%
Other	5.2%	12.1%

Subgroup Differences

The survey asked a number of questions about people's backgrounds and experiences, allowing us to break down the data into a number of subgroups. Some of the statistically significant differences are highlighted here.

Clergy vs. Laity

About a quarter of the respondents were priests or deacons. Many of their responses clearly reflect their professional role. They reported significantly more involvement in mission outreach activities, and they tended to place a higher priority on all aspects of mission activities, both those aimed at individual spiritual growth and those aimed at the improvement of the community.

Interestingly, clergy were stronger in their support of lay ministry than were lay people. Only 3% of clergy, but 23% of lay respondents, said that clergy should exercise the primary ministry of the church and that lay people should support this ministry. And in their comments about the single greatest challenge facing the church in Minnesota, 14% of the clergy versus only 6% of lay persons cited a need to better equip church members for ministering to their communities.

Other responses suggested some degree of dissatisfaction with their clergy among lay leaders. Lay leaders were more likely than clergy to say that churches need to do a better job of serving their members (56% vs. 46%) and to cite as the single greatest challenge the irrelevance of the church to the unchurched and youth (15% vs. 7%).

Ethnicity Differences

Only 50 of the church leaders responding were persons of color, a number too small to meaningfully break down by individual ethnic backgrounds. However, a pattern of differences did emerge when we looked at persons of color as a group. Compared to whites, minority respondents placed a significantly higher missional priority on community improvement, including advocating for the poor, fostering reconciliation, and healing the sick.

Minority respondents also were more likely to say that the church isn't relevant to the unchurched and youth (31% vs. 15%), that its theology is too traditional (18% vs. 10%), that it's too elitist (44% vs. 34%) and that it isn't serving its members (64% vs. 53%). These responses were echoed in the open-ended comments about the single greatest challenge facing the church. Minority respondents were more likely to cite the irrelevance of the church to modern life (24% vs. 13%).

Gender Differences

Respondents were 55% women and 45% men. In general, male respondents were more conservative and critical, and female respondents were more community-oriented and hopeful. Women placed a significantly higher priority on advocating for the poor, fostering reconciliation, providing an inclusive community, and equipping people for daily ministry. They also placed a higher priority on preaching the good news, but felt less confident than men in proclaiming it. Women were more hopeful than men about the future of the Episcopal Church in Minnesota, and took more hope from nearly all the sources listed.

In contrast, men were more likely to choose as one of their top mission goals bringing people into a life transforming relationship with Jesus, and to cite a need to go back to the basics (27% vs. 17%) as the biggest challenge facing the diocese. Men were more likely to agree that the church's theological identity is too vague (36% vs. 22%), that we've diluted the gospel (30% vs. 16%), that the church isn't relevant to the unchurched (20% vs. 12%), that we lack growth strategies (76% vs. 69%), and that the church isn't serving its members (60% vs. 48%).

Age Differences

Significant age differences were very few, partly because younger people were very scarce in this sample of church leaders (which in itself is an important and perhaps telling datum). Fewer than 8% were under the age of 40, and over 70% were 50 or older. Differences worth mentioning were that those under 50 were less likely to know their own spiritual gifts, were more hopeful about the future of the church, and placed a lower priority than did older respondents on competing in the spirituality marketplace.

Location Differences

Two thirds of the respondents were from the Twin Cities metropolitan area, and one third in Greater Minnesota. Those from outside the metro area had a somewhat more positive view of the diocesan leadership than did those from the metro area. They gave significantly higher marks to the vitality of the diocese and the national church, and took more hope for the future from diocesan leadership, the growth record of the church, and its advocacy history. Non-metro churches were more likely to say that the demise of the MN Episcopal Church would mean fewer places for immigrants to worship and a diminished ministry with Native Americans. They also were more likely to cite the need for a greater focus on smaller congregations as the greatest challenge (8% vs. 2%).

Metro residents were more likely to say that they were using their talents in ministry quite a bit or very much (63% vs. 56%), and they rated the vitality of their own congregations as higher. Metro residents were also more likely to agree that we've diluted the gospel (26% vs. 17%) and that our theological identity is too vague (32% vs. 21%). They were also somewhat more likely to cite going back to the basics as the greatest challenge facing the church (16% vs. 12%).

Church Size Differences

Nearly half (47%) of respondents said that their home churches had an average Sunday attendance of fewer than 100, and 64% said that the size of their congregation was less than 150 on a Sunday. For purposes of comparison, we broke out the relatively large churches, sized 150+, from the smaller churches.

In some ways the differences by size are similar to those observed by location, since most of the larger churches are in the metro area. Those in the larger churches felt that their congregations were more vital, were more likely to feel that their talents were being used, and were more confident in proclaiming the good news.

Those in smaller churches placed a higher priority on creating an inclusive community, while those in larger churches placed a higher priority on advocating for the poor. The smaller church respondents also gave higher marks to the vitality of the diocese and the national church. Accordingly, those in the larger churches were more likely to cite poor leadership as the greatest challenge facing the church (16% vs. 10%). Those in the larger churches were also more likely to cite the need to go back to theological basics (20% vs. 12%).

Mission Practice Differences

One of the issues in the discussion of mission is how a commitment to mission activities develops. Does one first develop a faith that emphasizes mission and then the outreach behavior happens? Or does involvement in mission activities lead to an awakening and deepening of commitment?

We can't answer the question of the direction of causation, but we did observe a strong correlation in the survey between participation in mission outreach activities and attitudes toward mission. We constructed a mission practices scale by summing the responses to the 11 mission activity items, and then divided the respondents into those above and below the median on this scale.

Those who were higher on the mission practices scale were significantly more likely to know the biblical spiritual gifts, to know their own gifts, to be using their ministry talents, to feel confident in proclaiming the good news, and to give higher ratings to the vitality of their personal faith. They also gave a higher priority rating to most of the listed mission activities including both the community-oriented ones like advocating for the poor, and the individual-oriented preaching the good news and bringing people into a relationship with Jesus.

However it happens, there is a strong tendency for respondents to practice what they preach. A further confirmation of this relationship comes from the free answer responses to the question of the greatest challenge facing the church: 20% of those who were lower on the outreach scale said that the church was not relevant enough, compared to only 7% of those who were higher on outreach. Relevance is as relevance does.

SUMMARY OBSERVATIONS FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

Like those who responded, the authors see in the data both significant challenges and reasons for hope:

- In numbers too large to be dismissed, respondents expressed a perception that the Diocese of Minnesota suffers from a culture of mistrust, anxiety and skepticism. There is a great yearning for a new spirit of partnership and collaboration.
- Leaders in the Diocese of Minnesota strongly believe that the church's members should be equipped for ministry in their congregations and the world and see clergy as primarily responsible for doing this. While a majority of respondents feel that the church has helped them discover their talents for ministry, less than a third reported using their talents very much. It is striking to note that over a third of the responding church leaders said they didn't know what the biblical spiritual gifts are, and only slightly more than half know which biblical spiritual gifts they have been given.
- The open-ended comments suggest a groundswell of interest in returning to the church's roots in the Bible, a fresh focus on Jesus as Lord, and renewed attention to the leading of the Holy Spirit. This pattern is reflected in the understanding of the church's mission most frequently identified by respondents as most central ("Bringing people into a life-transforming relationship with Jesus as Savior and Lord") and in the greatest number of written comments. Such comments cut across a variety of different demographic groups. While a minority expressed concern over the church's perceived liberal position on homosexuality and other social issues, many did not. The common thread in these comments is the belief that mission renewal for the Diocese of Minnesota is directly linked to refocusing on the sources of the church's theological identity in Jesus, the Bible, the Book of Common Prayer and Anglican theology.
- At the same time, creating an inclusive community was the other of the two most highly rated mission goals and was referenced frequently in the comments. Exactly what being "inclusive" entails seems to be contested, however. Some respondents, particularly those on the conservative end of the spectrum, interpret what they see as efforts to be inclusive, in fact, to be exclusive of them and their beliefs. A fundamental challenge for the church is to reconcile the desire for a return to theological roots with the desire to be open to people of different beliefs.

- The church's ministry with Native Americans received several positive comments and was seen as one of the distinctive aspects of mission that would be lost if the church disappeared. However, very few commented about ministry to immigrants and refugees, and creating a home for immigrants ranked lowest among the items that would be lost if the Episcopal Church here were to disappear.
- The survey also reveals ambivalence about issues of class and education. The comments of some lauded the Episcopal Church's appeal to the well-educated, in contrast to the perceived anti-intellectualism among other Christian groups. Other comments, however, were critical of what they view to be the classism and elitism of the Episcopal Church and see this as a hindrance to participation in God's mission.
- Finally, there is a marked misalignment between how people perceive the diocese currently relating to congregations and how they think it ought to relate to congregations. This is echoed in the high number of comments critical of the bishop, diocesan staff and clergy. A large majority of respondents want a greater degree of partnership between the diocese and congregations, as well as between clergy and laity within congregations.

To further explore the issues raised in this survey we urge readers to read all the verbatim comments included as Appendix 3 to this report. It is our hope and expectation that the subsequent follow-up survey in fall 2007 will reflect a perception of progress on these issues.

APPENDIX 1: COPY OF THE SURVEY

Diocese of Minnesota Mission Survey

What does it mean to be Episcopalian in Minnesota at the beginning of the 21st century? This survey is designed to help the Bishop’s Commission on Mission Strategy understand the behaviors and beliefs of leaders in the Diocese of Minnesota around questions of mission. Please respond candidly, from the perspective of your primary congregation. The data will be reported in group form only and individual responses will never be identified. If you have questions about the survey please contact Dwight Zscheile at 651-766-7532. Thank you!

I. PERSONAL PRACTICES OF DISCIPLESHIP AND MISSION

First, we’d like to know about how you express your sense of mission in the things you do, as well as a little more about who you are.

1, In the last year, how many times have you done the following?

Mark one for each item.

	Never	1-2 Times	3-4 Times	5-10 Times	More than 10 times
a. Served the poor or needy through an outreach ministry	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Invited a friend to church	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. Shared your faith story with a non-believer	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. Led an activity of a ministry team	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. Mentored or developed other ministry leaders in your church	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. Participated in a <i>local</i> cross-cultural mission trip.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
g. Participated in a <i>non-local</i> cross-cultural mission trip.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
h. Publicly advocated against injustice or oppression	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
i. Visited a sick person.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
j. Personally reached out to a neighbor in need	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
k. Visited someone in prison	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other mission practice: (<i>write in below, if any</i>)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

2. Has the church helped you understand what your primary talents for ministry are? (mark one)

- Yes
- No
- Not Sure

2-A. How much are you actively using your primary talents for ministry? (mark one)

- Not at all
- Very little
- Some
- Quite a bit
- Very much

3. Do you know what the biblical spiritual gifts are? (mark one)

- Yes
- No
- Not Sure

3-A. Do you know which of the biblical spiritual gifts you have been given, if any? (mark one)

- Yes
- No
- Not Sure
- Not applicable—don't know what they are

4. What is the size, in average Sunday attendance, of the primary congregation in which you worship? (mark one)

- Less than 50
- 50-99
- 100-149
- 150-199
- 200-249
- 250-299
- 300+
- Not sure

5. How long have you been a member of the Diocese of Minnesota? (mark one)

- Less than 1 year
- 1 to 2 years
- 3 to 4 years
- 5 to 9 years
- 10 to 14 years
- 15 to 19 years
- 20+ years

6. What region of the Diocese do you live in? (mark one)

- 1 (Northwest Minnesota)
- 2 (Northeast Minnesota)
- 3 (West-central Minnesota)
- 4 (Southwest Minnesota)
- 5 (Southeast Minnesota)
- 6 (Northeast Metro)
- 7 (St. Paul/Southeast Metro)
- 8 (Minneapolis/Richfield)
- 9 (West/Southwest Metro)
- 10 Not sure

7. In what type of community do you live? (mark one)

- Rural
- Small Town
- Suburban
- Urban

8. What is your role in the church? (mark one)

- Lay person, not employed by the church
- Lay person, employed by the church
- Vocational Deacon
- Transitional Deacon
- Priest

9. What was your age at your last birthday? (mark one)

- Under 20
- 20 to 29
- 30 to 39
- 40 to 49
- 50 to 59
- 60 to 69
- 70 to 79
- 80+

10. What is your gender? (mark one)

- Male
- Female

11. Which of the following describe your racial/ethnic background? (mark all that apply)

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Pacific Islander
- Asian American
- Black/African American
- Hispanic/Chicano/Latino
- White (non-Hispanic)

II. ATTITUDES AND BELIEFS ABOUT MISSION AND MINISTRY

10. On a 0 to 10 scale, where 0 is not important and 10 is absolutely essential, how important are each of the following in your understanding of what the church's mission *should be*?

<i>Mark one for each item.</i>	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
a. Bringing people into a life-transforming relationship with Jesus as Savior and Lord	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Creating an inclusive community in which there are no outcasts.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. Healing the sick	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. Fostering reconciliation within individuals, families, the community and the world	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. Meeting people's spiritual needs in today's competitive religious marketplace	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. Building and supporting educational, social service and other community service institutions.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
g. Advocating for the poor, marginalized and oppressed.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
h. Preaching the good news of God's gracious rule over the whole of human life.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
i. Equipping the church's members for ministry in daily life.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

12-A. Of the ways of understanding the church's mission listed above, which two do you see as most central? (Write in two letters of items from the list above)

13. How confident are you to proclaim the gospel in a pluralist society (mark one)

- Not at all confident
- Only slightly confident
- Somewhat confident
- Fairly confident
- Very confident

14. Which of the following better describes your understanding of what the relationship between the clergy and the laity SHOULD be? (mark only one)

- The clergy's primary role is equipping lay people for ministry in daily life
- The clergy exercise the primary ministry of the church and lay people support this ministry

15. From what you know, which of the following best describes the CURRENT relationship between congregations and the Diocese? (mark only one)

- Congregations primarily serve the Diocese by distributing resources for a larger mission
- The Diocese primarily serves congregations by equipping and networking them for ministry
- Congregations and the Diocese partner mutually at the local and regional levels to participate in God's mission in Minnesota

15-A. What SHOULD that relationship be? (mark only one)

- Congregations primarily serve the Diocese by distributing resources for a larger mission
- The Diocese primarily serves congregations by equipping and networking them for ministry
- Congregations and the Diocese partner mutually at the local and regional levels to participate in God's mission in Minnesota

16. From what you know, which of the following better describes the CURRENT relationship between the Diocese and the national church? (mark only one)

- Congregations and the Diocese primarily support the mission of the national church, which transcends local concerns
- The national church primarily serves the local mission of congregations and the regional mission of the Diocese

16-A. What should that relationship be? (mark only one)

- Congregations and the Diocese primarily support the mission of the national church, which transcends local concerns
- The national church primarily serves the local mission of congregations and the regional mission of the Diocese

17. How would you evaluate the vitality of the following?

Mark one for each item.

	Not vital at all	Not very vital	Somewhat vital	Very vital
a. My personal faith and discipleship	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. The life and ministry of my congregation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. The life and ministry of Diocese of Minnesota ..	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. The life and ministry of Episcopal Church (USA)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

18. Please check how much you agree or disagree with the following statements about the current state of the Episcopal Church in Minnesota.

Mark one for each item.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
a. Our society is changing rapidly and the church must adapt in order to survive and thrive	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Our form of church has lost its relevance and cannot compete with other religious and secular attractions.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. Our institutional image is too elitist and exclusive to attract diverse populations.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. We lack strategies and methods for growing our churches	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. Political and theological battles at the national level have damaged our public image	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. We have diluted the gospel and compromised the message of Christ.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
g. We are too traditional in our theology to speak to contemporary people.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
h. The Episcopal Church needs to do a better job of meeting its members' needs.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
i. Our theological identity is too vague for us to be bold in mission.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

19. What do you think is the single greatest challenge facing the Episcopal Diocese in Minnesota?
(write in below)

III. LOOKING TOWARD THE FUTURE

20. How hopeful are you about the future of the Episcopal Church in Minnesota? (mark one)

- Not at all hopeful
- Only slightly hopeful
- Somewhat hopeful
- Fairly hopeful
- Very hopeful

21. How much hope do the following give you for the future of the Episcopal Church in Minnesota?

Mark one for each item.

	None	Only A Little	Some	Quite a Bit	A Great Deal
a. Our mission history of church planting in the early years	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Our mission history of advocacy on behalf of oppressed people	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. Signs of the active leading of the Holy Spirit in our midst.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. The leadership of the Diocese.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. Our record of implementing new strategies and techniques for church growth	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. The vitality of my local congregation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

22. Please check how much you agree or disagree with the following statements about what would be lost if the Episcopal Church in Minnesota were to disappear.

Mark one for each item.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
a. Without our unique expression of the gospel, some people would not hear the gospel at all	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. The poor and needy in our state would not be as well served	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. Many seekers, doubters, and progressives would not have a place to explore their faith questions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. Minnesota would lose a rich liturgical, musical and artistic telling of God's story.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. Many members of the burgeoning immigrant populations in our midst would not find a church home	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. Many members of marginalized groups, such as gays and lesbians, would not find a welcoming church community	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
g. Ministry to and with the Native Americans would be significantly diminished	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
h. Other (<i>write in below</i>)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

23. Finally, please add your own comments about the current and future mission of the Diocese of Minnesota.
(Write in below)

Thank you!

APPENDIX 2: RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS

Region		Community Type	
Region 7 (St. Paul/Southeast Metro)	19.0%	Suburban	37.6%
Region 9 (West/Southwest Metro)	18.3%	Urban	30.1%
Region 8 (Minneapolis/Richfield)	16.9%	Small Town	22.8%
Region 5 (Southeast Minnesota)	13.0%	Rural	9.5%
Region 6 (Northeast Metro)	8.8%		
Region 2 (Northeast Minnesota)	7.5%		
Region 1 (Northwest Minnesota)	6.2%		
Region 4 (Southwest Minnesota)	4.6%		
Region 3 (West-central Minnesota)	4.3%		
Not sure	1.3%		

Church Role		Years in Diocese	
Lay person	72.7%	20+ years	55.1%
Lay person employed by church	4.6%	10 to 14 years	12.5%
Priest	17.2%	15 to 19 years	10.0%
Vocational Deacon	5.0%	5 to 9 years	12.3%
Transitional Deacon	0.5%	3 to 4 years	5.2%
		1 to 2 years	3.7%
		Less than 1 year	1.2%

Home Church Average Sunday Worship		Age	
Less than 50	26.1%	Under 20	0.3%
50 to 99	21.6%	20 to 29	2.1%
100-149	15.9%	30 to 39	5.5%
150-199	12.5%	40 to 49	18.3%
200-249	9.4%	50 to 59	29.5%
250-299	5.4%	60 to 69	24.9%
300+	8.3%	70 to 79	15.3%
Not sure	0.8%	80+	4.2%

Gender		Ethnic Background	
Female	55.2%	White (non-Hispanic)	94.4%
Male	44.8%	American Indian	3.2%
		Black/African American	2.6%
		Hispanic/Chicano/Latino	1.0%
		Asian American	0.5%
		Pacific Islander	0.0%

APPENDIX 3: LISTING OF OPEN-ENDED COMMENTS

Note: these comments have been edited to remove any references that might identify the respondent. Responses to both free answer questions are arranged together by coded category.

Category 1: Need greater communication/marketing/getting word out about the Episcopal Church Responses to Greatest Challenge Facing the Episcopal Church in MN

Defining who we are as Episcopalians to the rest of the community.

We need to tell our story in a format that can be heard by folks looking for a spiritual home. I believe that we fill a very great need in the world it is just that nobody knows who we are and what we believe. They confuse us with all the other Christian folks who are in the news and doing odd things. We have much to offer, we just have to figure out how.

Getting people in the doors! Once they're here, they learn what it is to be an Episcopalian. But getting them here can be challenging.

J. above captures it well--we do not have a clear voice about our unique and much needed message (especially where we are in a conservative rural area), and do not articulate our theology in a way that those both within and outside the church can understand what and why we believe as we do, and that it is theologically and scripturally sound!

We must be able to articulate the genius of the Episcopal Church's approach to living through the questions, conflict and concerns. To do this we are each going to have to learn to talk about God and our relationship to God with more openness than Episcopalians or Minnesotans are comfortable with.

Learning to be bold in reclaiming our unique understanding of the Gospel.

Too many people don't know about our ministries and how lovely our liturgy is. Many Episcopalians serve the greater community, but not necessarily through the Church. We must make our presence known! We are a hidden gem of a denomination.

Increasing church membership as we compete with 'feel-good' megachurches that are more style than substance. We need to proclaim the message that we are a vital church with the means to meet people's spiritual needs. We also need to better articulate that we are a welcoming church to all people. This is what drew me first to the Episcopal Church and what keeps me here.

Bringing awareness of what the Episcopal Church is about, including and beyond the highly-publicized issues of the past two Conventions. If more people knew what the Via Media has to offer, I think our numbers would grow quickly!

Being able to communicate to non-Episcopalians in everyday, understandable language about what our church stands for.

We are an answer to the seeking of many people, but we are way too hidden. Divorced & remarried R.C.'s, feminists R.C.'s, thinking people who don't want easy answers handed to them. Why can't St. Mark's Cathedral, at least, advertise in the Star Tribune on a weekly basis? People don't even know we exist. The diocesan ad of a few years ago: 'What in the world are Episcopalians up to?' was brilliant. Repeat, repeat, repeat, repeat.

Communication

We have become the 'Gay' Church in the public's eyes, rather than the 'Tolerant' church who welcomes all. We have a complex position that needs to be advocated and argued for strongly whenever we suffer rhetorical attacks. Conservative ideology masquerading as religion should be confronted. I should have good replies for people telling me I am going to hell because I have gay friends. And so should the conservatives who go to my church who have to hear criticism from their non-Episcopal conservative brethren. We need rhetorical tools!

Effective communications and leadership.

Letting people know who we are, that we are a community that shares a prayer book and worship and serves but are very diverse as to belief and cultural background (at least our congregation is).

I think that if our message of including all and caring for all is able to be clearly heard we will grow. The challenge is to have that message heard above the din of hate speech.

We need to grow. We need to clearly define who and what we are, and tell people that. We have so much to be proud--most of all our inclusiveness, and our right traditions.

The Episcopal Church needs to identify itself and be available to the people in the suburbs. It combines traditional liturgy with openness to scholarship, tolerance of differing views, respect for different approaches to life, and faithfulness to the Gospel. The prominent place that the Episcopal Church accords to reason (in addition to scripture and tradition) should be emphasized. Many people are not aware of this and would be attracted to it, if they knew.

Being a more obvious option to people who are looking for a church

Communication!!! Education of lay people in the workings of the Diocese and the National Church. We have a great church but I think our light is under a bushel. We do so many good works lets shout about it.

To come to know who we are, what we stand for, and then proclaim that!

To attract and invite people to join us in our mission to make Jesus Christ and his love known to all.

Showing ourselves to be a vital ministry as an alternative to the more fundamentalist churches. We need to show that we are a living breathing and thinking church with questions to ask each other and journeys to share.

To erase our elitist image and project our inclusive image

We, as a mainstream Christian denomination, need to speak loudly and clearly in the public media about issues important to us. We regularly see Pat Robertson or Jerry Falwell talking about their understanding of the Gospels, but rarely do we ever see any discussion or debate from the mainstream denominations. Our understanding of the Gospels needs to be heard! For instance, I would love to see the Bishop on TV when issues of war and poverty are discussed. It seems that the public only hears from the Evangelical church, and most of it is gay-bashing or fear-mongering. Jesus' message of love needs to be heard in the newspapers, radio and TV.

We miss opportunities to let people know what we, the Episcopal Church is doing in the world and in the community. It seems to me that the majority of the time we hear of the Episcopal Church in the news is in relationship to controversial issues, rather than the outreach and good that we are doing in the community.

The perception of the community that we are somewhat elitist.

Church Growth by promoting our strengths and progressiveness. Celebrate things the Church has undertaken rather than apologizing for them.

Institutionally, the never-ending task of communicating to people about the reality and life of the diocese. It would be great if someone could develop a great video the would include 1)info about the diocese and its activities and leadership structures and principal leaders, including a little about the impossibility of the bishop's job and the unwieldiness of the diocese but the failure of many attempts to find a way to divide it, 2) what it means to be a member of a diocese, the Episcopal Church, and the Anglican Communion, 3) in addition to showing the great range of diocesan-related life (Breck, Shattuck, ECS, young adult ministry, diocesan people providing leadership at the national level, Total Ministry and Indian Ministry, CREDO, national youth events, Gen X leaders, etc. and all kinds of folks I don't know about), and some thoughtful, interesting, and lively statements from people about their faith, it should also 4) offer a candid picture of where the diocese stands within the structure of the Episcopal Church. e.g. The D. of M. is generally considered one of the liberal dioceses of the church, but it also includes many people who would not consider themselves part of that perspective, with an honest attempt to delineate the proportions, and examples of individuals at varying degrees of agreement or disagreement with the dominant mood; that it has a significant GLBT component that ranges in its sense of belonging; that it has a mostly-proud history of mission with American Indians, about total ministry, about large and small parishes, suburban and urban congregations, how the top five congregations in the diocese in giving account for half of the budget of the diocese, or whatever the figure is. The point is, when you don't lay this stuff out you create insiders and outsiders, those who get either no picture or an idealized picture, and those who know the gossip and scuttlebut. Obviously it would have to be updated every 2-3 years, but with modern digital editing it should be possible to edit only those parts that need to be changed. The script would be written with such updating in mind. Finally, it is MANDATED BY CANON (or other very strong policy, like

Safe Church training) that this video be a part of every inquirers class, baptism and confirmation class, and vestry training in the diocese. Such a video would be costly, and would be at least an hour long, but would pay for itself in parish pledges and ACG income within a very few years. It could probably qualify for a grant from the Lily Endowment, as a prototype for all dioceses / mainline denominations. While it is true that the church is changing etc., etc., like any institution its members still need to have a clear sense of who they are. Beyond this fundamental need for members of the institution to know what the institution actually is, the greatest challenge of the diocese is to engage everyone of its members, to the extent they are emotionally and spiritually able, in a cluster of four related discoveries: to a) identify their biblical gifts, understand the concept of gifts ministry, and find ministries (within or without the parish) in which they can use those gifts b) be able to articulate why they attend the Episcopal Church in their own words, but also in words that can be understood by people who have never been in a church in their life, with a self-understanding that goes beyond common phrases about liking the worship, the prayer book, etc. c) identify spiritual disciplines or practices that allow them to grow in knowledge and love of God and d) articulate the reasons for the decisions they have made about stewardship of their money, time, gifts, social and political power, and their possessions. By the way, since I can't see ahead to know if there will another place in this survey for general comments, I want to share the reason I gave a 9 instead of a 10 for advocacy. The statement is phrased in a very upper-middle class, noblesse oblige style. It sounds like the usual Episcopal manner of implying that we are advocating on behalf of others, like we ourselves are not the poor, unemployed, disenfranchised, etc. It also seems like a limited vision of social ministry: vital as advocacy is, there is the deeper dimension, for those who are in fact fairly comfortable, of coming to know personally, having compassion for and solidarity with those who are oppressed.

Presenting a cogent message to attract new members.

Deciding what that is and communicating it to members and others. I'm not aware of any diocesan goals. Perhaps I'm not paying attention, but maybe the message should be louder.

Communicating its mission and objectives to the congregations.

We are too content to stay within our parishes ... associate with each other ... than to truly reach out and proclaim the Good News of Christ. As a result, other, more 'forward' churches, especially the fundamentalist types, are gaining members and visibility at our expense.

Episcopalians as a denomination are invisible. Within our own ranks, we can't agree on terms for naming ourselves! 'Episcopals', 'Episcopalians', 'Anglicans'! We need to know who we are as a people - as a team. To be as visible as Lutherans.

We have to let the world know that we are here, it concerns me that we offer good liturgy and an openness to the world's marginalized people and all people free of judgment and condemnation and we can't grow. I think that we need to use the media and really let the large percentage of people that don't go to church that we are here and are prepared to accept them.

Communicating our message to the larger community

Changing our image as a separated group

Clear communication

Communicating who we are to the un-churched

The elephant in the room is how close, with minor theological exceptions we are to the ELCA. Maybe we should consider a merger - at least in Minnesota. Maybe not. But in small communities, the theology of worship is very, very similar. It's virtually impossible to create 'brand separation.'

Communication

The Episcopal Church is the best kept secret - we need to spread the word.

Tell people we are Protestant. And we welcome all races, creeds etc. The Eucharist is very vital for our services. Prayers are printed in the prayer book for congregation. Keeping Bible preaching - Communicate with the public and share!!

We need to tell people that Episcopalians are generally quite intelligent people who have thought deeply about theology and have chosen to be a part of this church rather than blindly and ignorantly being here.

The way the numbers have been presented, it's survival. We must get beyond that so that we can grow. We need to do a better job of selling what we have - our liturgy and our inclusiveness and freedom to think.

Helping non-Episcopalians and unchurched folks know us as we truly are

Communicating our beliefs and who we are as a denomination

Increasing visibility

Damage down via current politics to the stereotyped 'Christian' image.

Increasing membership We need a PR campaign so people know who we are.

Attract and welcome new members for population growth through outreach and ministry and spreading the Word about the Episcopal Church as a whole

Partnership of vision requires communication

Better communication between diocese and congregations

Communicating relevance & necessity to rank & file members

Category 1: Need greater communication/marketing/getting word out about the Episcopal Church

Open-Ended Comments about the Current and Future Mission of the Episcopal Church in MN

We are a diocese of incredibly talented people. More needs to be done to get the word out about the Episcopal Church - its basis of scripture, tradition AND reason - an open and affirming church in spite of a few of our dioceses. We also need to get the people in the pews doing more outreach under the name of the Church in order to be more visible. I don't know if we'll ever be out-there, one-on-one evangelists, so we need to be visible as a group, leading by example.

Whatever the mission of the Diocese of MN, it must be embraced by all congregations in the Diocese. Today, I couldn't tell you what that mission is and I'm very active in my local congregation. Here's an example: We have beautiful liturgy, but are we actively training current and future priests, deacons and music directors on how to bring that liturgy to life? We have one of the best hymnals in the 'business.' Are we celebrating that richness in ways that allow us not to have to apologize for not being more 'modern?' Are we taking that rich liturgical and musical heritage and creating new, updated liturgies and music for churches that want to expand their reach. The evangelicals are producing a HUGE amount of music and worship materials for their churches every year, most of it unusable by a congregations that want to stress the 'we' rather than the 'I.' What is the Episcopal Church doing? We need to be able to proudly state why we are different from another denomination without apology. If we're not moving forward, we're moving backward. With the right leadership at all levels, the Diocese could help us do this collectively rather than on a parish by parish basis.

Episcopalians are great at living into what the Holy Spirit calls us to do, but figure it's kind of unbecoming to let the world know what we're doing and what we're about. We like to be quiet in our faith. This needs to change. We don't need to brag about ourselves, but we need to aggressively let people know that exploring spirituality -- at a church -- is appropriate and relevant; we need to let them know that the Episcopal Church is one of the most open places for spiritual exploration and fulfillment; and we need to get the message out in ways that will most effectively reach younger people.

In regard to 18a.---The church must adapt, not by compromising its message or abandoning its traditions but by communicating effectively and offering opportunities for service.

We do so much, so well. But what are we missing? Why is the Diocese and its parishes losing or not attracting new members? What happened to our strong youth involvement of the '80s? And let's market--it is not a dirty word.

There needs to be better communication between the Diocese and local churches. The average parishioner does not know what the Diocese and the national church are doing. There should be a liaison between the Diocese and the local church that would be a contact person to get the word out to parishioners.

We are an unknown and misunderstood church denomination in Minnesota. We need to choose a distinguishing characteristic/feature that we have in our unique understanding and living out of the Gospel and tell others about it.

The 'maintenance' mentality and its accompanying low self esteem about our church needs to be buried. We need to renew ourselves and create a vision of hope and new energy through the workings of the Holy Spirit. This needs to be transmitted to the people in the pews. Jesus Christ needs to be at the center of all our work. Hope for the future needs to be our mantra!

Continue to help parishes be more relevant to their local populations by marketing our unique approach to Christianity

Most folks in MN do not even recognize the Episcopal Church as part of their heritage. They do not know what we believe or why. What is the church doing to change that?

We hide our light under a bushel. If we do not tell our story, no one else will.

I would hope that we could be bolder to publicly proclaim the Episcopal Church as a sensible, reasonable and practiced Way of understanding this blessed world here and there, now and then!

WE NEED TO GET MORE MEMBERS AT x. BUT I AM NOT SURE HOW TO DO THAT. WE HAVE A GREAT CONGERATION AND GREAT PRIEST. IT IS A VERY CARING CHURCH AND A GREAT PLACE TO BELONG.I HOPE WE CAN GROW THIS COMING YEAR.

I don't have much 'connection' with the Diocese. I don't think our church leadership communicates well with us ... informs us and gets us excited about what is happening at the Diocesan level ... gets us involved beyond our parishes.

It is vital that those who are marginalized by society be taken care of and be made to feel welcome among us. I am thinking we need more overt advertising about the 'meat and potatoes' of what the Episcopal Church is and what we stand for and what we believe and what we can do for society. It seems that too many people have no idea of what the Episcopal Church is.

I am hopeful that others will discover the openness of the Episcopal church. I think there are others who like to think, challenge and still be welcome.

Our manner of church growth needs to be examined critically, it's too hard to get established in growing communities, I live in one. I need to reemphasize that getting the word out about us and what we are all about needs to be emphasized not only regionally but nationally using the media, its what people now use. It is not good for us only to be on the news when we ordain a gay bishop or elect a woman primate...these are great things but more needs to be out there. Thanks for this opportunity.

Vital to future growth & success: Communication--within/without our congregations, the diocese & the public. Openness and transparency in our affairs. Collaboration among our congregations and of the diocese with the congregations. Continued reaching out to the least, the lost, the marginalized and welcoming them into our midst. Present to the world a quiet confidence in our support of the least/lost/marginalized. (I wonder whether some of us question our church's stand re same-sex unions, etc., and feel unable to hold up their heads with some of our more conservative brethren who are vocal in their opposition to this stance.)

I think our diocese will have a fantastic future if we have the courage to evangelize about who we are, what we believe and what we do.

Reading Soundings it seems there is a lot of vital activity all over the Diocese. Much of it involves our youth. Which is great. We just don't seem to be able to spread the word about our church, its history and its relevance to a 21st Century world. But we can do this.

I do believe each one of us needs to do more to reach out even in our own churches to people who are here and to guests. We have to become more loving but aggressive when people visit us. In addition we need to reach outward more in community. We need to let people know who we are, Whose we are, and what we stand for. Maybe we can learn from the Lutherans as we engage in becoming stronger as Christ's people. We are not Lutherans, but I think we can learn from them and others who seem to be growing.

There is too much talk and hand wringing and not enough input/action at either end of the spectrum. Ask non Episcopalians what they like - don't like - understand - don't understand about the church.

We need full time efforts to increase membership within our communities. Clergy is the most important part of this in my opinion. We also need PR for seekers to understand our unique structure within the Christian faith community.

The Bishop should take more public stand on social justice issues. The community needs to know what the Episcopal Church stands for.

As I (and I am a part of this) look at my own parish, we are too introspective and are wary of anything approaching 'aggressive' evangelism. We, especially the Women's Guild, are active in supporting community needs but it is done almost in an invisible manner. I don't think our State of MN has a clue as to what our diocese is doing beyond the national decisions regarding gays, lesbians, etc. Bravo to that but we do more. Better PR? How do we break out of our introspection?

Category 2: Go back to the basics—renewed focus on the Bible, Holy Spirit; orthodox Anglican theological identity over liberalism

Responses to Greatest Challenge Facing the Episcopal Church in MN

Getting over itself, and being open to the direction of the Holy Spirit

Too liberal/secular

Focus and conform to the teachings and words of the Historical Jesus

We have lost too many members who are disgusted and disappointed with the current leadership in both the diocese and the national church. We cannot pick and chose which portion of the bible suits our needs at any particular time. We need to pay attention to St. Paul's letters and not St. Paul Wellstone. The diocese of Minnesota and the National Church have left the conservatives of the church way behind and have publicly wondered why donations have fallen off. We are trying to attract many immigrants into the church, but how can we accomplish this when they are very conservative in their attitude toward homosexuality and ECUSA flaunts it. You cannot have both. Choose.

I believe that our greatest challenge currently is knowing how to deal with the political fall-out from national decisions as they affect us locally, both within the diocese and within our individual congregations. It is imperative that we remain unified in the face of adversity. As a diocese, I believe it simply comes down to asking the question, 'What would Jesus do?' It's as simple as that.

I believe that the Diocese, as well as the broader ECUSA is consumed with the concept of diversity, but does not recognize that diversity also includes traditionalists, or its Orthodox members in that inclusion. The all-consuming issue of gay marriage, ordination, etc. seems to forget the needs of the pew. In those pews are families who want their children to have a Faith to guide them through difficult times, marriages that need Faith to make them survive and thrive, grieving families after a loss, addiction, and on and on. With so much time and energy spent on inclusion and diversity, it seems that the family in the pew is forgotten. Certainly not the priority. Scripture, tradition, reason. Seems to me that scripture and tradition are greatly diminished by what this diocese and the broader church call reason. Hence, the message is cloudy and diminished. People seek a clear message. If it is to dismiss Scripture and Tradition then we might as well be Unitarians.

A philosophy of relativism and, it seems, a theology of universalism, have eviscerated any real sense of mission. Perhaps more to the point, it seems that few of our clergy have experienced that life-changing meeting with Jesus Christ, believe that He is indeed the only way to the Father, and see the need to share that good news with their congregations. (There may be others who would like to reach out, but don't quite know how to do so.) Without clergy, hence also many laypeople, who have not been changed by personal repentance & faith, how does that get ministered in our churches to new folks? If one religion is as good as another, we don't feel 'compelled' to share that Good News that Jesus said could only be experience thru Him. So our churches don't grow, and we seem to be withering away throughout most of the diocese.

Overcoming a negative image we seem to have now as Episcopalians

The diocese is an utterly lost, theologically vapid institution. It has compromised the Gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for some sort of generic passive notion of inclusivity by which nothing can ever be criticized as wrong. It has demeaned our Lord and made him some sort of wandering prophet rather than the Son of God.

The worship life of the Episcopal Church (in Minnesota and elsewhere) is its principal means of mission and outreach. The challenge is to make that historic worship available to people of all races and backgrounds without diluting it or demeaning it. Healthy inculturation does not deny Anglican identity or history. Similarly, it is baptism that is open to all people, not the table. (The table is open to all who have been baptized.) In gathering around that table, our Anglican identity is both affirmed and explored when people of faith enter into the meaning of Word and Bread

and Wine week after week, year after year. There are no quick-fix solutions to the growth of Episcopal churches in Minnesota, and denying our identity is a long-term disaster.

Divisive national issues and bad press have drawn attention away from our strength: welcoming all regardless of background. We need to find ways to reach out to all and to help them understand God's love and acceptance, not judgment.

Leadership in accordance with God's word

To uphold the true message and mission of Christ in our changing world and not dilute it to meet societal needs.

Reaching members who have left the church - sometimes to other churches, but more often who have simply stopped attending church at all. Rebuild the existing churches where populations remain static. Try planting new churches where populations are growing. But don't abandon current churches to do this. Remember some people in the pews are there to learn and are still seeking. You have to work at keeping them. Keep the focus on the bible, because if you abandon biblical teaching you have no source of authority.

I believe that our single most important challenge is to renew ourselves in that feeling of being loved by God. This is the source of our mission. Without a profound personal realization of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit we are stuck trying to change things. Our personal reliance on the power of God in our daily living is crucial. Trying to be a social activist without this foundation is senseless.

We have moved away from Scripture and are trying to satisfy our own needs. The Bible does not need to be revised. The truths are there.

Our theological Identity is the best kept secret in the country. If we made clear our theological identity, which has been (look at the BCP) fully incarnational and trinitarian through reformation and modernity, we wouldn't be in so much trouble here in post-modernity!

The Diocese, and to some extent the Church (ECUSA) has deviated from the word of the Lord. There is time, however, for repentance and seeking redemption from the Lord. ECUSA is splitting the world church and the church within the USA. Homosexuals should not be ordained. ECUSA must stop the earthly game of power grabbing by hijacking our faith. God is greater than ECUSA. ECUSA is nothing but an earthly organization.

Accepting the truth of the resurrected Christ

Lack of personal conversion to a living faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Ridicule of this concept by clergy and prominent lay leaders. Politics, and political correctness, are the true Gospel of this diocese.

I think the polarization of our faith by political manifestos is the biggest challenge. We are an accepting people who require a belief in Christ, not a belief in a conservative or liberal doctrine, to belong. I think we as a Church tend to forget that at times, and we need to be reminded Who keeps us together.

The Episcopal Church USA has become indistinguishable from the surrounding society.

Teachings of the bible are very important; the MN Diocese, as well as the National Episcopal Church is doing a very poor job in following the word of God. They have done their own interpretation of God's word to fit our more liberal society. While I think it is important that we welcome gay people into our worship, I think it is equally important that we do not allow them to preach from the pulpit!

I think that the greatest challenge is for churches, parishes and missions is to stop being concerned with what has been traditionally done and to listen to God and the needs of each of their congregations...to move from survival and being a survivor and to rise from the ashes and become victor. We need to allow ourselves to see the strengths in our ministries rather than just dwelling on the negatives. We have the gift of unconditional love and we need to use it rather than just profess it like most of our competitors.

Ministering to the entire diocesan body of member Episcopalians rather than just to special interest 'progressive Christian' factions. Remaining true to the traditions of the Anglican Communion and not abandoning the liturgy of the Book of Common Prayer. Those members in the diocese that are more traditional and are little bit more conservative are being ignored and excluded. Those members that hold to the orthodox side of the Episcopal Church are willing an able to adapt more towards the middle than those who are radically bound to push the liberal progressive movement in the church. Members that cherish the traditional form of Episcopal worship are being disenfranchised in

our diocese by the more vocal liberal way with an attitude that your views don't count. or if you have those views you are completely and totally politically incorrect and thereby unwelcome in our midst. Inclusiveness is for both sides.

To openly praise God...besides the Alleluia's written in liturgy.

Attracting new members same sex marriage issue

Being a church that truly worships God in spirit and in truth

We try too hard to be 'Evangelical' and have forgotten our Catholic roots. We've become just another Protestant group; indistinguishable from the various Lutheran groups. The unique vision of the Via Media has been lost.

Getting back to preaching and teaching about a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

Most Minnesotans appear to be political, social, and religious moderates. What little they know about the Episcopal Church is shaped by news reports of its 'radical' actions and positions. The greatest challenge for the Episcopal Diocese of Minnesota is to find ways to appeal to these moderates since it is their support and commitment that sustains most churches.

Too many Episcopalians are tepid Christians, who are not solidly grounded in the Scripture, tradition and reason of our church. The building is often more important than our spirits.

We have diluted the Bible and the Gospel so much that the Truth is not found anywhere. It is very disheartening. Also, the church has tried so hard to be inclusive that it has become exclusive.

Being all things to all people.

Being open to transformation by the Holy Spirit.

Teaching adults and children to discern between the platitudes so prevalent in our religious teaching (** happens but God has a PLAN!) and the theology that God gave us free will and agonizes with us when terrible things happen.

We have become so concerned with corporate and demographic models that we have allowed our selves to be co-opted by popular and corporate culture. Our stewardship has become about meeting the 'bottom line' rather than giving from thankfulness for abundance. Our Evangelism has become one of assuming that planting churches in growing areas will add up to growth. We have sold our soul.

At the clergy conference, Bishop Jelinek said that 'we are all in the same boat.' and I don't know if that is true. I do not believe that someone who claims 'Jesus is one path of many to God' is in the same theological boat as someone who claims that 'Jesus Christ is the way, the truth and the life.'

Imparting spirituality. I believe that people are looking for spirituality and that we will grow if we help in that aspect. We tend to be quite interested in tradition and liturgy while we neglect spirituality.

We are not in the same 'theological' house. Until we reclaim our central belief in the saving act of Jesus Christ on the cross and his resurrection for the salvation of the world, we have nothing more to offer than a non-profit agency committed to its particular cause. We compete with each other (parishes and theological beliefs of clergy) that our core is mushy and meaningless to most people. Jesus is not a way among many. Jesus is the way and that way is love. We have a mission to do and we can't agree on what the mission is about.

Answering the Windsor Report with some humility and convince dissident Episcopal Churches not to try to leave the Am. Epis. Church

The fact that side issues (homosexuality, etc.) are discussed rather than core doctrinal issues -- this occurs because a large majority of the diocese have a religious background but not a vibrant relationship with the living Christ. The issue is complicated by the religious folks using the same words as the relational ones but meaning something different by them, therefore no meaningful communication occurs.

The attempt to legitimate and incorporate sexual moralities and practices which are condemned in Holy Scripture, anathematized by the vast majority of the Church Catholic, contrary to nature, and morally, spiritually, relationally, and physically unhealthy. The unceasing focus of our TEC on gender and sexual issues. The total lack of discipline and accountability in the House of Bishops. A horrible lack of accountability among the clergy and the refusal of too many bishops to discipline them. Too many bishops and clergy whose theology and moral theology is so 'broad' it

lacks Christian shape; is contrary to the historic Christian faith. The never-ending, persistent effort of the GLBT community in TEC to broker into the church an acceptance and affirmation of their sexual predilections and 'life-styles'.

Understanding/articulating what the Gospel of Jesus means for us as Episcopalians.

Losing our essential bridge building identity and theology. We are in danger of not being the *via media* and if we lose that we are lost.

Lack of a Gospel based contextual theology and mission strategy for the institution known as the Episcopal Diocese of MN. Religious and secular models of mission and theology based in modernity and post modern cultural concepts are detrimental to the potential of the Episcopal Diocese of MN.

To claim our heritage and live it. Not to be market oriented, but to be Gospel oriented. Live the social and political dimensions as did Christ

Staying true to our identity - we are unique! We don't need to be like all other 'brands' of churches - there are many of those and many people seem to 'church-hop'. I fear we will 'dilute' our identity to fit 'all-comers' and thereby lose the importance of our Episcopal identity in the process. I am proud to be an Episcopalian and not just a 'church' member.

The issue of consecrating a gay Bishop

FEAR of change, fear of others different than ourselves (xenophobia including homophobia), fear of growing and losing 'small' church relationships, fear of not being theologically sophisticated/academic....therefore we are casting about, we are unsure how to even define what it means to say 'Jesus/' 'Lord'?' Savior'/ our social action to outcasts is diluted 'good news'.

Lack of a clear biblical/theological basis for its actions & decisions

Trying to cater to today's culture at the loss of our calling to be witnesses to Christ and His redeeming call to all sinners to repent

The singular teaching that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. (John 14:6)

We must keep the faith. Words of new liturgies are not helpful to me. This is a very rigid diocese in some ways. It is very, very loose in other ways. I would like to see deacons used much more effectively. I would attend convention and clergy conferences if they were not so very, very expensive! How about charging less to those who are retired? How about encouraging parishes to help those attend vital meetings. Maybe we could set charges based on distance, need of hotels, etc.

A lack of commitment to the Bible, to the Gospel as defined by Scripture, and to orthodox Christian doctrine and discipleship.

Not having a common theological mission in salvation through Jesus Christ.

Preaching a message that gets thru to people, that they understand and can ponder as opposed to all the religious doctrine and distractions going on every day that takes away from the simple teachings of Christ

Issues facing the global Anglican communion

Evangelism

The Episcopal Diocese of Minnesota has undermined the authority of God's Word written; has twisted and perverted it to appeal to an increasingly rebellious and sinful society; has rejected the theology of the Anglican Communion and shamefully revised it to please people instead of honoring God. As a result, Diocese of Minnesota has shamed and embarrassed its people and its clergy the eyes of the rest of the Body of Christ. The only hope for the Diocese, if it truly chooses to be a witness for Jesus Christ, is to repent of its revisionist agenda, and the shame and dishonor it has caused the Lord.

Loss of being Christ centered. It is not up to us to define God or mold Him to meet our current societal priorities.

Preach the gospel as it is written and stop interpreting the word of God in a bid to please others.....'Heaven and Earth may pass away but the Word of God remains forever'.

To get back to the idea that the Church helps people live God centered lives.

Homosexuals should not be ordained. The church leadership has made a mess of the church by deciding to do this.

Regaining a sense of mission re: making Christians. I have a sense that we have taken people's being Christian per se for granted, and so lost our evangelical reach/touch. In a pluralistic context this no longer works.... we have to be clearer about our basic commitment to getting people into Jesus. 'If we are going to do some urban mission, we have to have some urban Christians.

The Episcopal Diocese MUST stay TRUE to the word of God as expressed in the scriptures. THE WORD CHANGES US WE DO NOT CHANGE THE WORD. The Diocese has deviated from the scripture. There is time for repentance and prayer for forgiveness. The Diocese must NOT try to re-invent or hijack our faith. God is greater than the Diocese. Diocese MUST serve God.

Communicating the transforming love of Jesus the Christ in word and deed, expressing humble confidence in the authority of the triune God as exercised in Holy Scripture, relinquishing personal sovereignty over money.

Theological identity not biblically grounded enough for mission.

TEC has so diluted the biblical message that it is not relevant. For example, the MDGs are fine and necessary goals, but supporting the UN has nothing to do with spreading the gospel. Yet that is the #1 priority for TEC in '07. Regarding 18a -- we cannot change Christ's message to adjust to the culture, but we can adapt how we deliver it, how we live it.

Learning to not follow popular culture in the formation of theological arguments. The inclusion gospel is muddled and broken. I believe that turning the current tide of thought in our Diocese is the greatest challenge

If we don't preach Jesus, we are just another social club or social justice group. Jesus is what makes us different. That is why we are called CHRISTians. If the diocese is not interested in preaching Jesus, it is not relevant to what we do as a parish or individuals

We have lost the most important thing - a living, personal relationship with Jesus Christ as Lord, and a sense of confidence in the truth and transforming power of the Gospel

We are in danger of losing the language and categories of evangelism and the spiritual life for commercial and capitalistic ecclesiology

Their embracing homosexuality as OK and not the sin that it is! The Diocese need to take another stand on that issue and follow God's word as written! (not 'interrupted' to suit a situation)

We must try to extend our assistance to the people to help them with their daily problems which all of us face today through connecting their problems to the bible and our teachings from the scriptures. We have become very catholic in our worship services which we have memorized and our worship services are more memorized than from the heart. Meet and teach our people on their level and help them to accept Jesus into their lives where their help will come from. If we change our traditional prayer book services and help them to live in this century rather than stick to the same Daily Prayer book procedure. We need to be more Evangelical!!

Our treatment of the gays

Giving people a reason to go to church. 'Community' doesn't cut it - my neighborhood is a community, my friends are a community etc. If worship remains personal, there is no reason to turn up. Liberal Protestantism has a weak theology of the church.

Unity among believers in the Spirit, reclaiming the Bible as true word of God to be taught, studied and used as a design for lift.

Preaching the Bible to people that are unchurched

Condoning sin! Gay unions Everyone is a sinner but condoning sin? Tsk Tsk!

The political and theological battles have damaged our image. Keep up with our changing society in a church healthy manor.

Not being bold in Christ

Being a church with God and Jesus Christ at the center

Teaching people to develop a relationship with God & His Son. Then the barriers/misconceptions between denominations and ever cultures may be lowered & will become less important and we can all get down to the business of a more tolerant world.

We lack confidence in what we believe. We assume our lack of numbers means (to us) that our faith lacks 'something.' * There were only 12 apostles

Engaging people in the community in listening to the Holy Spirit

I feel the greatest problem facing the Episcopal Church is diluting the gospel and compromising the message of Christ.

Running after too many false gospels, the Diocese is diluting the 'brand' of Christianity. Since the Diocese is unclear what it stands for, seekers are attracted for superficial, sentimental and social reasons...which changes nothing and no one. Shame on us.

The Gay Issue. The church caved on this issue!!

We are watering down the message of Christ in an attempt to woo people. We don't trust the truth of the Gospel & the work of the Holy Spirit to convict people. We try to make it more 'appealing' to pop culture & its world view.

Category 2: Go back to the basics--renewed focus on the Bible, Holy Spirit; orthodox Anglican theological identity over liberalism

Open-Ended Comments about the Current and Future Mission of the Episcopal Church in MN

I see more and more members fall away to conservative sects and the Diocese of Minnesota just does not get it. I love my parish priest and members. I fear that they will eventually be driven away because of the ultra liberal attitudes (that are allowed to be voiced during service). This past Sunday's service left a very bad taste in my mouth.

Parishes and diocese need to work more cooperatively together if we are to have a future. We need to regain some of our piety; move forward out of secular modernity/scientific a-theism and into the postmodern world; need find a way of walking with the global south.

We do have a wonderful heritage of church planting. But the future does not look promising to me without changes in our thinking. I think new methods & strategies are pretty useless without the underpinning of the conviction that what people really need is a personal relationship with Christ & then, having been reconciled to God, learning how to walk in reconciliation with other people. Meanwhile we seem, in most parishes, to be waiting for people to come to us and/or engaged in a holding mission until the last person dies & the lights can be turned off.

Until we rediscover our true heritage in the Catholic tradition of the church and drop all the new-agey unitarian heresy, the Episcopal church will fade away and become a small boutique church for leftist unitarians in vestments.

Again I do not feel we will succeed unless we listen to the Gospel and trust in God, leaving our fears behind.

I believe that if we listen for the Holy Spirit and follow what we hear, the Episcopal church can remain a vital relevant church. I believe that we are here to serve a purpose - our challenge is to determine HOW to do that.

Our mission is to preach God's truth as we understand it to all who care to listen. Our growth will naturally follow from that.

Our mission is to serve, that service is empowered by God; our empowerment is based on the transformation in our own lives by the grace of God. Our worship is the central touch point of that healing grace. Our biggest fear is our failure to be led. We need to listen for God's direction in our lives and trust that He will make happen what needs to happen. Part of that listening is in doing positive and constructive things for others. Too much time is wasted in trying to fix ourselves, find ourselves and other forms of navel gazing. These are a waste of time. The solution to our problems is service. God gets at us there. Fear of ourselves, the fear of being found out, the inability to accept ourselves as we are keep us from keeps us away from his grace. It is hard to put this into words. I can not verbalize this well enough but my experience of God has taught me this.

The diocese is not serving the greater community by teaching Christ in their midst. I truly believe the diocese will be destroyed from within.

We need to return to more traditional things and not be revisionist

The only mission of any church is to be God centered. God is Almighty and greater than the Diocese. God is capable of doing great works even without ECUSA or the diocese. Just place Christ and the word of God in the CENTER of everything you do. That is enough. The rest is human effort and is worthless.

We can be hopeful about the future if we focus on the work that we are called by the gospel to do - and if we bring some joy and life into our style of worship.

Our Diocese is the living example of the children's story, The Emperor Has No Clothes. We have to face the truth of our wayward choices and return to the simple, profound message of the Nicene Creed.

Become more Christ centered because God works in mysterious ways and on His own time schedule.

I fear the Diocese of Minnesota, reflecting the national church, will become (maybe already is) a niche church willing to exclude many who fear losing something to embrace those who feel they have nothing to lose. We have not developed the skill to effectively reach out to and teach the first group while welcoming and serving the second group.

If we are continually lead by the Spirit, we can not fail. If not, we will be crushed under our own weight.

I am grateful that we are finally addressing the key issues of why we exist and what our message is. I just hope we have the honesty and openness to embrace the truth and return to the centrality of personal conversion and a living personal faith in Jesus Christ as God, as Lord, and as Savior. We have so much to offer within the Christian spectrum of Minnesota! Let's not lose this unique opportunity!!!

We need to be clear, to declare in word and deed, authentically and with passion, that we are here to reconcile the world to God. Too much attention to niche politics, liturgy and buildings appear to detract from higher things. It seems to me faithful discipleship requires that we consistently and collectively direct ourselves mostly towards those people nearest to God's heart -- the disadvantaged of the Beatitudes, the poor, the young and the immigrants. How do they measure up in our budget?

The mission of the Diocese must not forget what got us here. We cannot be all things to all people.

There will always be a place for people who place non-judgmentalism, inclusiveness, multi-culturalism and diversity among the High Virtues.

I feel and am seeing a great division in the Episcopal Church, and it saddens me greatly. As long as our leadership is liberal to the point of allowing the gays and lesbians to become, and/or stay ordained, we will continue our downward spiral. People laugh at me when I invite them to Episcopal worship - they remember the headlines of the past few years and brand us the church of gays. Because I believe God's word is very specific on this topic, I cannot defend the Episcopal Church. The majority of the members of the church I attend share my views, which is the only reason I remain a dedicated Christian in the Episcopal Church.

I think the leadership in our diocese has been welcoming and inclusive of gays and lesbians but not very welcoming toward traditionalists (those who do not welcome gays in clergy). I think the bishop has been dismissive of those who disagree with him, thereby marginalizing a small but persuasive minority who have found leadership outside the diocese. Our congregations are finding leadership elsewhere and it is hurting our community. We can no longer afford to ignore those with whom we disagree. Our Anglican heritage gives us the understanding and tools we need to achieve reconciliation within our diocese, but so far I have seen no motivation within the leadership of this diocese to attempt to heal the rift. Pray for the life of the church.

I am not comfortable with the U.S. Episcopal Church or our diocese position on ordination of gay, or lesbian clergy. I have no problem with straight women clergy. Our extreme position has fractured us nationally and locally has caused loss of some excellent lay people to other denominations.

I have great hope for the willingness of the members of this diocese to hear the still small whispers of the Spirit and the movement of the Spirit that blows in gale winds!

I think the work of the Holy Spirit is manifest in a community willing to take risks and dream bold dreams. I do not see that in our diocese or, very often, in the parishes I know.

Without a foundation of Truth, the church will ultimately fail. It is very sad that this great church of ours has strayed so far. We have become lukewarm.

God is good. We are a faithful people, yet flawed, but trying hard to love and serve the Lord. All will be well.

Contemplation of the Holy Trinity and celebration of the Holy Eucharist must precede action and apostolates. Action and contemplation go together in our faith, as opposed to what the dominant cultural paradigm assumes. The Dio of MN is caught up in the mercantile paradigm of marketing and just in time production for consumer need. This is the pernicious 'wind of doctrine' of 'relevance' that will impede our prayer and prevent us from actually living for service for the poor and marginalized.

I pray for a new spirit in the church leading to intentional, God-directed mission.

I am concerned about our continued focus on gender issues as opposed to issues of salvation. If we preach, teach and practice the one great commandment all other issues seem to fall in place.

We need to support more of the local parishes and new parishes. We need to lead not with social programs and advocacy but with a rich and strong commitment to being instruments of the Holy Spirit in transforming more people's lives.

We must maintain our identity as we change to become more effective as a vital and growing church.

My perception about the current mission of the Episcopal Diocese of Minnesota is that we have wandered aimlessly for several years and placed actual emphasis on things other than living and preaching the Gospel in/to our congregations and throughout the State. This action has been driven by a subconscious but palpable fear (of what I don't know). My perception about the future mission of the Episcopal Diocese of Minnesota is that, unless we change our basic approach, the current Mission Strategy concept will be on the dustbin of the history of the Diocese of Minnesota by 2008. Our future will be one of continual decline in the rural areas, eventually being just a few isolated pockets (e.g., Rochester, Duluth, St. Cloud, and the Twin Cities' area). If the Diocese can stick with the Mission Strategy for ten years, I can foresee some change; however, we need to address our rural and small churches. 'There are no whales where there are no plankton.'

I perceive the Church in Minnesota to be an institution, cautious and more concerned with its survival than its mission. I believe that if the Church is going to thrive in the 21st century, rather than merely persist, it will need to envision a new understanding of itself, and will have to take real risks in support of its core beliefs. I believe that the Church must faithfully preach and live out the teachings of Jesus Christ in all things, and strive to be recognized by young and old, believer and unbeliever, as a true expression of Christ's love. The church must be a visible and committed champion of social justice, as a deliberate reflection of Christ's example. The Church must tend assiduously to the life-long spiritual growth and understanding of all of its members, and teach them how to be evangelists of the Gospel and not to be afraid. The Church should eschew all displays and evidences of wealth and privilege, and focus all of its resources upon the works that Christ has set before it.

The Episcopal tradition represents an attempt to comprehend--literally, hold together--diverse and divergent aspects of faith. We live in a culture which seems to value one-sidedness and 'clarity' at the expense of nuance. We are a counter-cultural church in this regard, yet we live with the memory of being a center-culture church of power and influence. We must ask ourselves if we are willing to live with being a small, uninfluential church for the time being, in order to preserve our gift of comprehension.

Focus on core mission

We need to be more scripture focused. Need to learn to be witnesses for the Gospel, not just the Episcopal Church. Begin the process of changing our logo to be more contemporary and more expressive of our connection to Christianity.

I pray that it is not too late to regain vitality and health within the Episcopal Church in Minnesota [and in many parts of the United States]. We have been consumed by distractions that have continued to weaken us. The clergy and lay in leadership positions have greatly discounted the importance of having the Episcopal Church USA a vital partner of the Anglican Communion. Some of our parishes have taken on a congregational approach to issues, some of our dioceses have taken on a diocesan approach to issues and the national church has taken on a national approach to issues. Our parishes should not be ruled only by congregations, our diocese should not make decisions by itself and the national church should not do it alone. These things are divisive and have alienated all too many people.

I am very pessimistic about the future of the Episcopal Church in general, and about the future of this diocese in particular. The future of more conservative and traditional Anglicans in TEC and in this diocese is very doubtful, and

the current leadership of both is DEAF to their pleas that they CANNOT and will not accept the GLBT agenda as it is currently being pursued by TEC. The only ray of hope is a slim 'perhaps' that the larger Anglican Communion will provide a some sort refuge for us.

In my opinion the current and future mission of the Diocese of Minnesota is at a critical juncture. Will we take the Bible/biblical narrative seriously, immerse ourselves in it, help others immerse themselves in it, and apply it to our daily lives, or will we continue to focus on peace and justice issues which, while not unimportant, are not currently articulated/approached with any sort of strong theological/biblical foundation? If we can learn to listen to God speaking through the scriptures and privilege the biblical narrative (while also helping people learn to read/approach it in a thoughtful, nuanced way), our efforts to participate in God's mission in Minnesota will have a greater chance for success and to thrive. It is not enough to be a do-good organization working for peace and justice in Minnesota and in the world -- there are many of those. My prayer is that our mission be motivated by prayerful encounters with scripture in community, taking the time to let the Holy Spirit speak to us about how we can participate in the work God is already doing in the world.

We have looked to institutional questions and answers for church stuff with a limited concept of God's action and spirit in the world. We, the Diocese, could begin by discerning where God is calling us, not with how do we save the institution. I believe that if we make disciples that practice Gospel based discipleship, the institutional church will find a home in the midst of the gathered worshipping communities of disciples.

Confidence in the future by claiming our unique heritage.

I am at a point in my life where after 25 years in the church, I am feeling it necessary to look else where for a church community. My experience at X parish has not been a good spiritual experience for some time. My relationship with Jesus is more important then forcing myself to go to a church that I no longer feel a part of. What is the current and future mission of the Diocese when long time members of the church have feelings like mine.

I am really praying that we can change course, like the rudder on a ship. We need to be open to the messiness of the Holy Spirit and proclaim a Risen Christ stepping into and beyond closed doors.

We need to work harder on bringing people to Christ-the Episcopal church has not done a very good job working evangelism. and not too many Episcopalians feel comfortable do this

The future of a denomination committed to the 'Episcopal' style and aesthetics in worship is to diminish to a much smaller, but self-sufficient denomination. The future of a mission-centered church willing and eager to work ecumenically and to advocate for the values of our baptismal covenant - whether or not that makes us 'distinctive' from other denominations - is not yet clear because that question has not yet been clearly posed to the diocese as a whole.

Mission should spring naturally from the grateful hearts of people who know God; it should be a byproduct, not a goal in and of itself.

The Episcopal Church has much to offer but its future and the future of the Diocese of Minnesota is dependent on the place that the Lord Jesus Christ has in the Church. It must clearly teach that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6). Related to this is the authority of God's Word. We must return to an orthodox and traditional understanding of it.

One of my mentors in the process of discernment once said to me, 'this is the Church of Jesus Christ, and if the Holy Spirit continues to work for it to survive; it will!

We are neglecting to seek and promote spiritual vitality in our churches and parishioners. How many of us are on fire in our faith journey? We sometimes seem to honor tradition and liturgy above helping individuals to become more connected to God in Jesus Christ. Cursillo has brought the love of God to so many people. Where is this really happening in our churches?

We seem to have lost the sense of spirituality in our quest for political correctness. The core of Christianity is not making people feel good or even a quest for inclusion. It is finding and knowing Christ in the lives of individuals and through individuals in the world around us. We have sought satisfaction of current human desires (such as approval of gay/lesbian life styles, ordination of women clergy, saying the 'right' thing etc.) at the expense of a search for Christ and listening to the Holy Spirit. We have conformed to society and let that shape our vision of God's will ... rather than the other way around. This diocese is not a mission driven evangelical diocese. The central diocese office has not planted a new parish or mission in decades yet we claim to be evangelical and mission oriented. We have hemorrhaged membership because we have attempted to centralize control and ministry at the diocesan office level rather than at the true diocese which is the collective actions of the parishes. Existing churches have been neglected

by the Diocesan Staff and the Bishop but it is the existing parishes that are the true outreach and evangelical ministries of the diocese. We are overstaffed at the diocesan staff level with very little of that staff on either ministry or parish health let alone growth. There is no true common vision and in fact no true common identity for the Episcopal Church in Minnesota. We have become a social services institution rather than a spiritual one. We need less cheerleading and more substance. Less centralized attempts at control and more emphasis on the local existing churches and their health and need. We need to strengthen existing congregations in order to make them viable and healthy. We have closed more parishes than we have grown. And we have not started any viable parishes in decades. Let's stop taking surveys and forming task forces. Let's focus on where true ministry happens ... at the local parish level. An Anglican church works from the parish level.

Keep the traditional values and history of the Church; stop trying to be everything to everybody.

Our leadership needs to repent and be humbled before and reconciled to God for straying from the churches biblical and orthodox tradition. When we stand for everything, we stand for nothing and nobody has any reason to seek us out apart from any other club or organization. The churches that are growing today are committed to the authority of Scripture, the uniqueness of Jesus Christ, and the importance of calling people to a demanding life of discipleship. Let's learn from that and return to core Christian mission, while bringing to the larger church our concern for justice, rich liturgical tradition, and unique blend of historic theology. The Episcopal Church is well positioned in some senses to appeal to the 'Emerging Church' population. We have the structure, liturgy, aesthetics and tradition that they long for.

I don't think there is any greater mission than sharing the life transforming message of salvation through Jesus. This affects both our life now and into eternity. I think that this bring life. We don't seem to have a common reason to do mission. Why do we want to grow the church? So that more people can become Episcopalian in MN? So that the Episcopal church continues to exist? I love the way we do worship together. I think its the Gospel within the liturgy and form of worship that can be of value to people outside the church. But the way we do worship without the strength of the living gospel would not be of value.

The Diocese of Minnesota and the National Episcopal Church are well along on the slippery slope to apostasy, which will in time drive all true believers, God-fearing, Bible-believing Episcopalians out of its congregations. I believe it will continue in the world as a trendier-than-thou, church of what's-happening-now. As such, with its perverted 'gospel' of inclusion without repentance and amendment of life, its 'mission' will fail to be pleasing in God's eyes because when all is said and done, it will not bring people into a soul-saving, Godly, and righteous relationship with Jesus Christ.

It will take a lot of work and commitment under the aegis of the Holy Spirit and by competent leaders to awaken our church to its mission.

I am concerned that leaders in the church do not appear to fully believe the Creed nor the vows taken at ordination. I am concerned that we are willing to accept new paths without considering or showing a connection with Scripture. I can love everyone and not love everything they do. God sometimes leads us in new paths, but He never denies Himself and even Christ explained His actions with Scripture.

The only HOPE and SURVIVAL of the mission is to teach/preach the TRUTH and nothing but the TRUTH.

In my congregation I see too much emphasis on entertainment and socialization and too little on God and worship. I would like to see a Church that is centered on God and helps it's members to be centered on God in their lives.

Truly, the Episcopal church I grew up in has been ransomed away with misguided political moves while missing the reality of the transforming nature of Jesus's gift through his sacrifice. We have forgotten of the narrow gates that He calls us to enter through. We have forgotten that the Holy Spirit is here to be with us in our trials. The Church is welcoming enough but it does not tell the whole story of repentance of sin. I feel we do not equip people with the strengths needed to face today's world. The Church seems to want people to feel good and doesn't care about our eternal life. At least, that is what it feels like to me. And that is different. What good does it do to say you believe, but do not show it in our daily life?

I feel the church has been high jacked by radical bishops who I can no longer look to for spiritual leadership. This is a big problem for the church.

Do not be Arrogant and aggrandize yourselves. Who needs the Diocese? God is greater than the Diocese. The only purpose of Episcopalian or for that matter any denomination existence MUST be to serve God, and to be God centered. When there are other objectives in your eye sight you deviate from The Mission. Deviating from the word of God makes the Diocese a redundant entity.

If the MN Diocese were to disappear, there are many other churches that would step into the gap for many of the categories above. It has lost vitality and relevance. It has become an aging, upper-middle class social club. And relying on connection with the GLBT population is not going to save it.

To restate my previous entry: The mission is muddled. Only the clear and unambiguous voice proclaiming Jesus as redeemer of our sinful lives will have effects that we will wonder at. It has been this way since that good news was first spoken. Changing that mission to one of primarily social works and personal fulfillment will only lead to the Episcopal Church in Minnesota becoming one of many non-profit groups vying for grant dollars to help the poor. While this does need to be done, it is NOT the PRIMARY mission of the Church of Christ. Our word and PRIMARY mission to the sinful and lost should be the news that Jesus has died for their sins in their place and that he rose from the dead to shatter the hold that that sin has on the them and the world. Only then can the church help feed the hungry and house the homeless with a clear purpose and conscience. Only then can the church truly love a person who is lost in sexual sin.

Let's embrace our status as a smaller denomination and embrace the calling of poverty of spirit, remembrance and radical dependence on God.

The discernment of the Spirit leads to mission & growth

Until the church proclaims the bible as God's Holy Word (inerrant) I see little hope of really proclaiming the Good News. Our services and liturgy are based on the bible and in my opinion are not to be interpreted casually. I find very offensive substituting she for the masculine God (He) - especially in the context of teaching small children! I also abhor the church's inclusion and sanctioning of gay clergy and 'unions' or marriages. The bible clearly says that homosexuality is a SIN - we should be trying to change peoples' ways - not affirming them!!

Both my wife and I are very traditional, old line, Episcopalians and don't particularly like the way the diocese has been taking on a 'liberal' approach over the past decade.

I feel we have got to get to people where they live and how they live in today's society... Not only by our Sunday Services which our beautiful prayer book and liturgy...(Sunday Services, Yes indeed.) I firmly believe that we should help them in their everyday living to refer to what the bible guides them to do at times of confusion and trouble in their daily existence and in today's worrisome world. We can't confine our religion just to our church on Sunday... 'Lord Jesus we need you every minute of every day, in every way.' I know most Episcopalians believe that we invite Christ into our lives at the Eucharist, but for me, and others like me, I never knew the joys of His being in my life until I personally invited Him in to live in my life. Thanks be to God.

I'm hopeful that through God's grace the Diocese will survive and flourish

We need to read and study the Bible and follow what God would have us do. Don't say the Bible is not relevant in today's society. Preach and talk about Jesus in peoples lives. People need to hear that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life.

American secular culture tends to define our ministry. We need to be proactive more not reactive always. We must not let God's Sovereignty be compromised in our thinking. Instead we can be mindful of the secular in order to keep us practical in our faith. (Thank you!) You are welcome!

We have such outstanding programs with Cursillo and Alpha. They are under-utilized. We are all sinners, we all need to repent. Our salvation is not dependent on the Episcopal Church but on Christ. Our church is actively ministering to all who desire to know Christ and understand in a deeper way, his yearning to make us whole and give us away to salvation by faith in Him!

Episcopalians/Episcopal Church doesn't do a good job of what our doctrine is!

I am old but still hopeful. The world in which we live, with overwhelming wealth, preys upon all of us, old and young, to adopt sinful ways.

May the Holy Spirit stay alive and well!!!

Until the Episcopal Church believes and preaches that the word of God (the Bible) was written by man thru the power of the Holy Spirit and is inherent, then the hunger that is out there will not be quenched. The services are outstanding forms of worship and are what's holding many of us.

I feel that our leadership is turning toward the concept of 'Unitarian in vestments.' Our history and tradition is one of a reasonable mix of Protestantism and apostolic catholic belief. We are being led, unwillingly away from this stance without evidence of prayerful concern for the 'political correct' stance the National Church and our Diocese take. We are a CHURCH, not a political party, a CHURCH, not a Department of Sociology. We only seem to 'render unto Caesar' and forget that the pairing also directs us to 'render unto God.'

There is hope - and a future - yes - 'These bones can and will live!' 'You shall be my witnesses in Minnesota, in the USA, in the Western Hemisphere and to the ends of the earth.'

Sending out this survey tells me that the Diocese really has concerns for its churches and meeting the needs of others. With our Lord's help, I believe we will grow and change where needed. His Spirit is with us.

I feel that we have gotten away from preaching from the Bible. Many clergy don't believe that the Bible is the divine word of God. Not many will even talk about sin or the devil. People don't wish to hear about that subject. They feel we live in a hunky-dory world and everything is OK! I see clergy being divorced and ordaining homosexuals or lesbians, that contradicts what the Bible tells us and almost makes it useless to us. We need to ask for forgiveness, repent and ask God to help us live a different life in Him. Yes I too am a sinner. Lets all change. Amen.

I see the future mission of the church as being to create an accepting environment for the worship of Jesus Christ, rather than as an advocate for social change. I look to the church to provide spiritual guidance primarily, which in turn can result in our doing good works in the community.

I believe that we should forgive the sinner, but not the sin. If a person does not repent and strive to live a Godly life, that person should not hold a position of authority or leadership in the Church. I think we are abusing the idea of inclusiveness and dividing the Church.

Non-Christian heresies are permitted to be preached in our church and in others we've visited in the diocese, e.g. diminishing the efficacy of the Atonement, and multiple paths to salvation. Also, we get a sentimental, childish God-is-only-love message repeatedly, with no mention of our sinfulness and no challenge to repent: God as senile grandfather. This survey seems to have as its sole end the marketing of good feelings to a self-absorbed Me generation. The EC behaves like any other social-service institution that operates within the current American culture. No wonder we're atrophying; we are not differentiated from pop culture, so what's the incentive to join, or stay? The EC should behave as if it were in sync with the priorities of the early church. We should be not just differentiated, but on the edge, challenging the culture wherever it departs from the great scriptural themes. And internally we should say 'Woe' to the Pharisees a half-dozen times or more! My suggestion: read Time Magazine, Nov 6, 06, pg. 58-9, and then do so for all ages of parishioners. Our family plans to leave our church early next year when our terms in office expire. We are burned out trying to minister in this institutionally-resistant mission field! We will recharge our spiritual batteries in another liturgical congregation - EC or otherwise - which is not so embarrassing to Jesus (cf. Mark 8:38) I'm glad you all asked and hope you'll receive these comments constructively...and act.

We need to get back to presenting the Gospel of Christ & the best way to do that is use His word - we need to rely less on our own 'intellect' & 'reason'; teach people about sin & redemption & trust the Spirit to move & convict them.

Category 3: Challenge of irrelevance to the unchurched and our own youth

Responses to Greatest Challenge Facing the Episcopal Church in MN

Being seen as relevant in the lives of the unchurched.

Relevance for younger families that are stressed, and looking for community, relevance and forms of communication that are up to date.

Aging population of church - not enough young people

I believe it is the same challenge faced by all denominations. We need to find a way to make church and all it entails - community, spiritual growth, and a place where our children feel safe - something that is attractive to those who have never experienced that type of community.

New church starts appealing to youth up to 40 year olds new energy in contemporary liturgy for new generations and also keeping tradition

I feel the single most challenging issue is that people seem to be busy with earthly things and are not taking time and attend church, etc.

Delivering the message of the relevance of the church in lives of people today no matter the changes that have taken place in society.

Young adults find the traditional church service to be not relevant to their needs.

The loss of membership and the apparent inability of the Episcopal Church to attract young families.

Keeping young people interested and active beyond childhood.

Keeping our membership. People are leaving because of our lack of young people involvement. As our children get older there is not much to offer them or is appealing to them to make them participate.

Offering a ministry that is relevant to life today

Competition against the secular world and the many distractions of modern society.

Making ourselves relevant and meaningful to the greater society, what would be missed if we were not here? Right now, I believe not very much. What can we do, to make an impact on community and culture that will help reveal the Kingdom of God to all people?

Finding a way to keep youth / young adults engaged in the church after confirmation

Responding to the spiritual needs of ordinary people and competing with secular temptations.

Learning that not everyone is like us. We suffer from a naive arrogance that assumes that the needs of others are like our own needs. We need to learn to listen to others and to believe what they say.

The health of the Church can be seen when we ask the question, 'So, how are the children?' It feels like very few people are asking the questions about children and youth. Even less are doing the important work to raise up youth leaders in our churches. The Episcopal Church of Minnesota must reflect in word AND action the importance of young people in our churches. We are currently doing neither. Many of my young adult peers are still engaged in the life of the church, because they were shown how important they were to the life of this place as young people. What message does our current budget, resources, and staffing practices tell the youth of the church today?

To be able to adapt to a changing world, when we have in our very essence the reason for our downfall.

Bringing youth into the congregation

Meeting the needs of people who are part of the younger generation which is so busy raising a family and is part of the 'fast food' generation, searching for a community that fits that lifestyle. At the same time, maintaining the uniqueness of the Episcopal Church and its inclusiveness.

Changing to meet the needs of young adults and families while keeping the traditionalists in our midst

We spend too much time planning and thinking and talking amongst ourselves with our particular and complicated and 'in-group' vocabulary meanwhile feeling wayyyy too comfortable with our current status quo (churches that are struggling but don't yet really feel their end, people who are happy to be unhappy, ineffective 'business models' for growth and education, boring worship, boring music, boring preaching). Okay I think that might be two things.

Competing with alternative ministries throughout the state, i.e.; the new wave community churches that 'go with the flow' of the current state of affairs.

Attracting people to join and embrace our church.

Adapting to the rapidly changing society by providing an atmosphere that keeps the interests of both the traditional person and the young people so that both groups can continue to learn from each other and grow together.

Attracting and keeping the younger generations. They are too busy for the traditional services--times, etc. We need to be much more innovative--not so 'hide bound' in what is 'church'. I love our traditions, but I am in the declining generation!

There are no offices, staff, financial resources, training or equipping for the Faith Formation (children, youth, young adult and lifelong learning) and Congregational Development / Evangelism ministries.

Determining who wants what we have.

Translating the messages into more understandable terms for today's youth and then delivering that message to everyone. The delivery portion is key because if that is missing, what is the point?

The greatest challenge to the Episcopal Diocese in Minnesota is to find a way to increase participation and present the good word and works of Jesus Christ in this 'more me now, instant gratification' world that we currently live in.

Meeting the needs of young families at a time where they are stressed working two or more jobs to make ends meet. They do not seem to have the financial resources to belong and participate in the ministry of the church. The messages they hear each Sunday do not help them with their day-to-day problems in my opinion. Religion has to move out of the past and into the present and the future.

To be relevant to all people. We need to be more active with the have nots in our society.

NO YOUNG PEOPLE ATTENDING THE CHURCHES.

Dying congregations that don't know how to attract youth and young adults.

Being relevant to people's daily and spiritual needs, thus being a place that attracts them

Being afraid of losing 'legacy' supporters and therefore not reaching out and cultivating others that would find the Episcopalian point of view inviting. I believe that there is a pent up need for a 'church for the rest of us.'

Attracting new young members

Relating to young unchurched families

Culture challenges

Quite simply, facing the reality of 'handing off' the identity and reality of the Episcopal Church ('the church' in general) to a younger and vastly different generation to whom many of the issues of the older guard are not relevant to contemporary mission and ministry. In other words, we need to embrace the emerging church in whatever manifestation it may reveal itself to be, which will likely be far different from the Episcopal church we know.

To remain relevant in today's ever changing world and to encourage and support our laity as they are challenged by emerging global issues. Clergy by themselves can accomplish little...as a team working with their laity, we can move mountains.

Attracting intelligent, thinking people, who think religion has no place in their lives.

I think the challenge is balancing what I think draws some people which is the traditional approach with a more contemporary way to attract parishioners who see the giant megachurches on TV and want the stadium seats and the projectors and the rock band for their worship. We have to find some way of balancing the two. I really like the traditional, but I understand people who want the Word delivered to them in a more 'entertaining' way.

To reach out and grow the church with families.

Attracting racially diverse families and youth at a time when there are so many distractions and demands on their time....families and youth are the church's future! We MUST have meaningful education and fellowship building activities that are focused on bringing people to know and experience Christ. The diocese MUST support the local mission churches in this area.

Gaining new members by outreach or keeping youth that grow up in the Episcopal community

Irrelevance

The Diocese must address to our young people just to keep in touch with them because they are our future Church leaders.

In Minnesota the Episcopal Church is irrelevant.

Ministering to the youth and ensuring that they grow in the church.

We need to appeal to and reach out to the youth of our state and communities.

Growing congregations, new congregations, through providing better youth and young adult programs. I see so many parishes - other religions - that are growing by leaps and bounds and we seem to be having to sell properties. What about Cass Lake? It is an amazing place which could be developed for winter groups - study groups, youth group activities, quilt/hobby groups, so many possibilities. Community groups often look for safe spaces to hold retreats. What is happening with that space?

Retaining our young people.

Finding a way to attract the younger generations who are looking for rock concert services without sacrificing the sacred for the secular.

People value liturgical tradition as much as theological traditions. Many want to grow but mean 'find more people like us'

#A above. Religion does not seem important to people in our society today as it was 50 years ago.

Nurturing youth participation

We need to be much more relevant. If we don't profess to have all the answers we should stress and celebrate the journey

The Episcopal Church is rich in tradition. This is part of who we are. Losing or changing this tradition changes us as a group. How does a tradition rich church change & adapt to a new world & still stay true to who we are?

Attracting new members and retaining our base of parishioners. We must recognize that our approach to religious ceremony and teachings are not attractive to everyone and don't need to be!

We need to have both traditional and true contemporary worship services. Today's young people are hungry for direction but we can not reach them if we can't attract them into the building and fellowship. We need to be as innovative as the evangelicals to get them in. Music, technology, etc. They are put off by ritual (I like it) and feel there is hypocrisy.

Keeping young people interested in what the Episcopal Church has to offer - namely, the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, how it can work in their lives and the lives of the people they interact with - not just Sunday morning but everyday.

Encouraging our young people to attend church and feel a part of the congregation

We need to 'modernize' the entire structure of services so today's congregation can identify. Needs to be more uplifting, energizing, contemporary

Telling people who are unchurched about the table

Competing with non conventional churches - they seem to attract young families more than we do. We are a little too traditional

People seem to want an exact answer to questions which we do not provide.

Keeping churches open and how to bring the youth and young families in the church. Both parents busy and both having full employment, is a problem. Cost of clergy is immense!

Staying alive - being relevant in a secular age

Letter C from above. Our institutional image is too elitist and exclusive to attract diverse populations

Getting young people to join our church and to keep them with our traditional practices.

Attracting young people

Our society is changing rapidly and the church must adapt in order to survive and thrive.

We appeal more to older people with traditional values. We can do better at encouraging and meeting the needs of young people in their 20's and teens. After baptism and/or confirmation a need to follow through and value these children and adults

Attracting young families - social justice issues unclear - putting too much attention on urban areas and not enough on small parishes in rural areas.

Attracting and engaging youth

Getting outside our comfort zone a little more. But we find that hard to do, because we're use to our routine. I prefer a more contemporary worship style, but we have a blend that offers things for every body. I don't know if we can attract a lot of new people. I think that is our biggest concern and challenge.

Enabling the unchurched/seekers that we do have something to offer them (beyond entertainment)

Category 3: Challenge of irrelevance to the unchurched and our own youth

Open-Ended Comments about the Current and Future Mission of the Episcopal Church in MN

The diocese needs to be pro active, face the diminishing Episcopal relevance help struggling parishes and provide a relevant way to embrace younger families, youth and children. We must also stand up for what the Episcopal Church has always stood for even if that eliminates some factions that don't seem to fit. We can't be all things to all people!

I think we are spending too much attention to who we are and too little to who are the unchurched and why.

We need to learn to be relevant to the current population while keeping some of the richness of our Anglican tradition. Don't throw the baby out with the bathwater.

What do other denominations do that attract so many people to them?? maybe we should have youth bands play at our services, have our congregations get more relaxed, loosen up not be so uptight to accept change. maybe visit one of those nondenominational churches and see what they offer their members and see why they have so many youths who participate. we are lacking somewhere and we need to find the way.

I am frustrated with the current mission, because it feels like youth and children are being forgotten. There is very little Diocesan involvement or presence in the few programs that are being offered for children/youth. What message does this give to members of the church under the age of 18?

We need to have more churches doing a variety of services, including traditional Rite I and Rite II Eucharist, along with contemporary Episcopal liturgy and music. We need to appeal more to the younger generation.

We need to pay attention to what is working in other churches and work toward change (without completely changing who we are as Episcopalians). At my office, I often talk with young people of other faiths who are so happy and energetic when it comes to their church experience. I don't currently see that at my church.

One of our greatest resources is our young people and we are ill-equipped to evangelize even our own children compassionately and effectively. I believe that is our single greatest lost in the maze of strategic plans, congregational development, and mission strategies. Episcopalians in Minnesota don't know how to share their faith with their own families.

I do not have much confidence in the Diocese. I hope that this survey will be enlightening and that it will support change; however, I see nothing in this survey that provides substantive information that will cause change to occur.

Become relevant to ministry and parishes while not totally wasting the resources it controls.

Creating strong leaders and excellent preachers.

Relationships between Bishop and local churches

Lack of interest to get involved and the elitists who may pour money at a problem, but aren't willing to get their hands dirty.

Horrendous, narcissistic leadership

Finding, calling and supporting high quality leaders with proven track records at every level.

The Bishop's office is an administrative disaster. There is no consistent follow through. The rules are always changing. Other than the Indian Mission, the rural churches are left to fend for themselves but continually dealing with Diocesan 'rulings' developed in a vacuum.

The biggest single challenge facing the Diocese is our own parishes and clergy, which, like many in society, think only of themselves.

The Episcopal Diocese in MN seems to have been in institutional and internal turmoil for many years. The focus of its work keeps changing and staff is never the same from one year to another. Many congregations are thriving despite this, but others struggle because there doesn't seem to be bold leadership at the Diocesan level. The Episcopal Church in MN needs to be much more willing to tell others including non-believers who we are and what we stand for. We ARE inclusive, we welcome dialogue about our faith and just because we're not standing on street corners doesn't mean we're not passionate about our belief in the power of Jesus Christ to change our lives each and every day. Leadership, practical tools and concise messages from the Diocese would bind us closer together so that we too, could bring the Good News to others. Particularly others that are put off by the messages currently being sent by many Evangelical congregations or the strongly exclusive messages currently being sent by the Roman Catholic church.

Lack of effective leadership at all levels within the Diocesan Staff. The problems within the staff in the recent past and continuing up to the present indicates poor morale and lack of attention to detail, resulting in a severe lack of trust between the parishes and the staff. To correct this is the 'greatest challenge'.

This Diocese and its leadership are more interested in the law and the importance of doing everything by the 'book' and less interested in God's ministry working creatively in the ministers of the church. This includes the laity as well as ordained.

Small parishes, growing costs, and a top heavy Diocese make it increasingly difficult for Episcopal parishes to be financially viable. We need to rethink how we administer and maintain our parishes so that they can focus their energy on growth and mission, not survival.

Unfortunately, the perception that the Diocese has little to no help to give our local churches. I have only been with the Episcopalian Church for two years. Yet I sense a hostility to the Diocese.

Do not hear the people in the pews!!!

Encourage congregations to become more involved in the Diocese and letting people serve their ministries without all the 'paper work'.

I experience the diocesan staff as secretive, with no cohesive, accessible, or understandable decision-making structure or process. I think the greatest challenge is its randomness, its waywardness, its lack of vision and sense of urgency facing the future viability of itself.

The Diocese is not longer listening to its members and its churches. It has ceased to support them. It's top heavy in staff and unresponsive to its membership. It does nothing in youth ministry, it has let Cass Lake Camp languish, and it must cease to bleed its churches of money for no real return. It must help its churches to grow in membership and attract new young families to survive, as we are going to die without growth. We are capable of spreading Jesus' message of inclusiveness and joy in His presence and hope for the world if the Diocese helps us with its resources instead of wasting them on what, we do not know. Cut our diocesan pledge in half, and sent the diocesan staff to our churches to help us. We cannot help the diocese at the risk of our own demise, for that will be the demise of the

Episcopal Communion in America, and then in the world, for we support the world by our dollars. Revive youth ministry, as your youth ministers have been begging you for years, also. Help us all, we cry to you.

Making ourselves and our mission and ministry more portable and adaptable. Our Staff heavy budget (1.7 million) including the cost of the Episcopal Office and Canon to the Ordinary makes it nearly impossible to do mission.

Deciding where and when monies should go. I would like to see the budget and where the diocesan monies are allocated.

We seem to disagree on how things (anything) should be done. I find this to be particularly true with the clergy. They seem to be a group of whiners. Things are either at the wrong time, the wrong people are in charge, the bishop doesn't ask for my opinion, etc, etc, etc. They are whining themselves out of work.

Our love for the small church.

Creating a Diocesan Mission Strategy that effectively enhances congregational missions through out the Diocese – we're a big spread out diocese! Should there be two?

Money. The congregations are using what funds they have to keep their doors open and are not able to support the diocese. The diocesan office is overloaded with staff for an organization in this financial situation.

Restructuring diocesan leadership, administration and finances to serve mission and ministry at the local level.

The poor leadership of the current Bishop which has contributed to the sense that the local parish exists to serve a directionless bureaucracy which in return does little to support the mission of the local church as we struggle to define our message and spread the good news in our community.

Our Bishop is an intellectual elitist who should allow parishes in rector transition to chose their own path.

Inability of our Leadership to 'Lead, Follow, or Get Out of the Way' There is a disconnect between words and action of leadership and between perceptions in 'Twin Cities' and 'Outstate' congregations. The perception geographically is that the concern in is the other area (leaving both areas discontent with leadership). Leadership gives the impression of being aloof and unconnected to congregations (again leaving congregations discontented with leadership) and leadership has a track record of trying too many new things and discarding them too soon for any fruit to come. The identity this brings up is one of inconsistency and lack of concern. This may not be the reality, but it is the perception.

Attempting to maintain old institutional structures, ministry models, and buildings in the midst of precipitous decline in membership is overtaxing laity and clergy and diverting energy away from doing the practices of a vital faith.

The means to establish strong connections and relationships between the diocese and its congregations. This can't be done simply through a small group of individuals who go out of their way to participate in diocesan events. The diocesan leaders needs to come to the congregations. That means confirming in the individual congregations, worshipping yearly with the congregations, and actively supporting the congregations with their presence as they work to build the base of the Episcopal church in MN. If I see someone from the diocese once a year in our church, it's a miracle and we're considered a large congregation. Less talking and planning in the Twin Cities and more getting to know the congregations in full relationship as Jesus did. From strong relationships with congregations (not only the leaders but all the congregants), the direction of the diocese and its needs will become very self evident. With good relationships established with diocesan representatives and with goals determined, measured and celebrated together the congregants will be there to partner to make things happen. As Bishop Whipple did time and time again when traveling meant walking or long canoe trips, diocesan leaders need to spend much more time with those they are attempting to lead.

Better diocesan leadership

Restoring trust between and local clergy and the Diocese and between congregations and the diocese.

Episcopal Diocese in Minnesota and individual congregations have done a poor job of strategic planning. I doubt seriously that there is understanding of the demographic and socioeconomic changes occurring in our communities. I think that too much of our planning is intuitive and too little is based on fact.

We need to re-organize so that we can do be effective in mission as we build to the future.

Lots of mandated costs for parishes. Guilt and shame for small churches. Fairness in Fair Share

Lack of leadership.

Reducing the size of the Diocesan staff so that more ACG can be kept at the local level to fund needed local programs and personnel.

The Frozen Chosen can't get the job done. It appears the teaching in Seminary is to disregard the wishes of the congregation and do what you feel is right.

Availability of priests for out-state parishes.

Overcoming the distrust that many congregations and clergy feel toward the Diocese. In some ways I think that it's been this way for too many years and the relational damage may be irreparable unless significant change is made.

The leadership of Bishop Jelinek and Canon Gary Gleason.

Fiscal health partnership between the diocese and congregations growing

Weak and misguided leadership from the Diocese and National Church. We are losing membership and congregations because of the actions of the Diocese and National Church

Both the Bishop and the clergy are out of touch with lay people and haven't the vaguest idea how to grow the Church. Unclear mission and values; religious identity obscure.

Finding a way to get all the churches to pay their fair share, so that critical Diocesan programs supporting ministries at the local and diocesan level will have funding.

Diocese is too geographically large to carry on an effective episcopate.

Creating a vision that congregations can trust.

One challenge is our lack of unifying vision which gives motivation and direction for ministry.

Loss of vision, mission and, therefore, membership.

Need to meet the needs of all the parishes and not just a select few.

1) From an ecclesiological perspective, we must understand why new 'Free' and other non-traditional church movements appeal to people and inform them of the depth and breadth available in the Episcopal tradition. 2) The institutional structure must change to meet the above challenge.

Balanced and Thoughtful Leadership from the clergy

The current leadership in the Diocese. By any type of objective metric, the Diocese of Minnesota has declined greatly under the leadership of Bishop Jelinek and his team. Head count, revenue, and morale in the Dioceses is the lowest it has been in many decades. I think the Bishop and his team should focus their energies on actually LISTENING to their constituents and healing the damage that has been done in recent years rather than 'spin' how great everything is going while continuing to focus on their own personal agendas.

Too many resources go to funding the Diocese. We need to pray, discern, reconfigure and focus on equipping the particular ministry of each congregation. All dioceses are in this bind. I propose 3 congregations be linked together, a different model. Let us thoughtfully and prayerfully do it differently. It is not working for the common good.

Leadership

Small churches cannot survive with the current salary/benefit scales required by priests. There does not seem to be an allowed way to compromise, if both parties agree. In today's society, there does not seem to be a good reason why priests have their health insurance paid in full by a congregation. No one else in society has their health insurance paid in full by their employer. There does seem to be a sense of entitlement in the compensation of priests. The perks are huge. In our small town, it is safe to say that our priest's salary and benefit package was perhaps in the top 1% of all employed women in town. All this for a Sunday attendance of 20 and going down. It's crazy. This situation will only get worse with the current salary/benefit scale.

Financial crisis in local churches, contributing to financial crisis at the Diocesan level

A Diocese out of touch with its congregation.

Embrace change - especially change the diocesan bureaucracy which has been self-serving and an impediment to congregational life.

Welcoming our new Bishop - soon

This weird transition thing - the Bishop is leaving in four years?!?! This is too long of a lame duck time & will hinder our recovery & growth.

Lack of forward thinking! and change

How does the local church (parish) see itself in relationship to Diocese

Training leaders how to reach out. To bring up those who have potential to help and not just rely on the same ones for everything

Membership Leadership

A lack of leadership in helping define our strategy to reverse the decline in our church, and to move ahead with a strategy once defined. Finally, the Mission Strategy Commission seems to be headed in this direction

Cutting administrative costs so more money goes to the mission - no admin.

We need more clergy

To reunite - no ordained Gay people. Prove to me in the Bible where it states that it is O.K. for them to be leaders in the church

Leadership

The church clings to tradition, it seems, as much as the roman Catholic church. If tradition serves to obfuscate and protect us from change - it is meaningless. The hierarchy of the church seems to be steeped in privilege and serves to meet out mystery of God in doses carefully managed by tradition! Where is passion? It (E. Church) is crowded with careful cerebrals.

There is very little definition on the role and the relevance of the Diocese in everyday workings of the individual churches

Making the Diocese relevant to the many parishes in Minnesota that don't really want to fulfill their diocesan assessment or can't understand why they should.

The Bishop's feeling of some kind of supremacy and his inability to listen to his people in the church.

Category 4: Poor diocesan and clergy leadership, structures, and financial practices

Open-Ended Comments about the Current and Future Mission of the Episcopal Church in MN

I believe we could do more to share the gifts and talents of clergy and lay leaders in this diocese, working together for the good of the whole, not just for our local congregations.

The Diocese needs to rid itself of its elitist attitude, esp. among the current leadership. We really do not do a good job of equipping people for ministry and giving them the tools to share what their faith is all about. We don't talk about God and, therefore, do not give people a way, a language to use when talking about God. We are very good at organizing people for advocacy, we just are not very good at organizing and equipping people for mission and ministry.

I believe that our current Bishop has a mission plan, and that it should not be abandoned during the coming transition.

The Diocese, as it is currently run, is dependent upon funding from parishes which significantly weakens their own ability to be all that they can be. Whether each parish has to limit staff, or program or outreach, it is less than it could be by the disproportionate 'fair share for the common good' that is taxed each year. I think this is a socialist approach and it does not settle will with this Minnesota Episcopalian. I treasure the rich liturgical Anglican tradition, am open to contemporary worship and music, treasure my church community and am deeply pained by the priorities of the broader church. We are a tithing family. But our tithe no longer goes just to our own church. Mostly from frustration with the portion of it that supports the broader church. I suspect that we are not alone.

The diocese has one purpose: support ministry at parish level. Every trip out of state; every dollar spent NOT on parishes; is wasted. If the diocesan office disappeared tomorrow it would be noticed by very few.

From my perspective we are challenged by political issues that are not necessarily of the church, but of the conservative political currently in power. We can be inaccessible and need to explore the growth of the emerging church, and the moderate to liberal evangelicals. We need to struggle for a while with the flattening out of our episcopal hierarchy. We need to deal with our lust and addiction for buildings and be able to close many of them to build larger communities and fill the better building we own. From this we can support youth and children's ministry, young adult worship experiences, small group ministries, etc. We need to work through a mission strategy of splitting larger successful communities and 'clone' them within the metro. We need to learn about how to be both congregational and hierarchical with a leadership style that can accommodate both. We need to become bolder, prophetic, skilled preachers throughout.

Diocesan efforts at mission need to be believable. There have been too many strategies that seem to have gone nowhere, with no accountability from diocesan leadership.

Infighting within ranks of leadership must cease. Attempts by top leaders to torpedo smaller more conservative congregations, must cease.

The best hope for the Diocese is the early resignation of the Diocesan and a major decrease in Diocesan staff.

I am sorry, but in today's world the 'top down' leadership model will fail. The failure of the ELCA to buy-in to the Apostolic Succession is a great example. How arrogant of our Bishop's to think we can survive without links and mergers.

The Diocese requires a radical shift in its goals and accomplishments. Strong leadership from the clergy must direct congregations of laity known for their complacency and ineffectual spirituality.

I strongly believe that the first mission of the Diocese is the health and vitality of its constituent parishes. The resources of the Diocese should be focused to this end. The Diocese should provide many more practical services to the parishes than it now does. Things like bookkeeping, information technology, repair and maintenance services, purchasing and so on. These things can be done more efficiently and at a significantly lower cost to the parishes if they are either centralized at the Diocesan level or provided through regional cooperatives. Lowering the burden of worldly concerns at the parish level will better enable the parishes to focus on mission. Also, we need to think of new ways to grow that reflect the times we live in (and without losing our Anglican/Episcopal identity). Instead of healthy parishes giving birth to new parishes through the traditional mission process, we might try creating a few super-parishes where one parish staff serves a small group of worship facilities that together enable the kinds of economy of scale that the mega-churches enjoy.

Surveys, focus groups, listening sessions, and so on are helpful, but we love them too much. Leadership is not a poll-tested sticking a moist finger into the wind. Our leadership is timid, uncreative, and loves to talk. Get to work. Start new churches. Ask people for money for THAT, not for more consultants or studies or programs named after Old Testament Prophets.

Why is the diocese always trying to reinvent the wheel ??

It is my belief that congregations across the whole of the Diocese need to see, need to know, need to be personally and practically known by, their pastoral shepherd, the Bishop, on a basis other than a once-a-year Sunday morning visit. Administration, endless committees, and strategy sessions never can replace the intimacy of personal relationships nor can long-distance encouragement supplant hands-on presence in the local experiences of building family.

I believe a radical shift is required, imaginative and creative thinking regarding a Missional Polity and restructuring. With all due respect, I do NOT believe Total Ministry can bear the weight of missional development for the coming century. We need to radically restructure in order to realistically face our future with hope and vitality.

SOMETIMES I HAVE THE SENSE THAT WE ARE TRYING TO 'SAVE' THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH. I DON'T BELIEVE THAT GOD WILL ABANDON THE CHURCH. IT MAY TAKE SOME VERY DIFFERENT FORMS THAN WE ARE CURRENTLY USED TO, BUT I BELIEVE THAT GOD'S CHURCH WILL PREVAIL. OUR TASK IS TO LIVE INTO OUR BAPTISMAL PROMISES. SINCE WE ARE A 'BISHOP'S CHURCH', SERVANT MODELING FROM THE EPISCOPATE IS ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL. WHEN I READ IN THE BROCHURE FOR THE BISHOP'S CIRCLE GATHERINGS THAT ONE REASON TO ATTEND WAS TO BE ABLE TO HAVE THE BISHOP'S EAR, I FELT SAD. IT DIDN'T FEEL LIKE A GOSPEL APPROACH OR PERSPECTIVE. I BELIEVE THAT JESUS CALLS US IN MINISTRY TO BE ALWAYS LISTENING. PERHAPS A QUESTION TO BE ASKING OURSELVES AS WELL AS EACH OTHER IS, 'WHAT IS THE MINISTRY GOD IS CALLING US TO INDIVIDUALLY AND CORPORATELY'. WHEN WE ARE EXERCISING THOSE MINISTRIES, I'M NOT WORRIED OR ANXIOUS AT ALL ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THE CHURCH IN MINNESOTA.

The Bishop and his core leadership team must go. A new collaboration with the local parishes much replace the old bureaucracy. We should be able to celebrate our rich tradition of inclusion and liberalism which uniquely is connected to tradition (which can evolve) and structure. We can sell the idea of this tradition to the unchurched and change lives!

Perhaps the Diocese of MN should do what the dioceses in Wisconsin did and separate itself in to smaller units that can better touch the congregations they're serving. I believe that congregations don't see the value that the large diocese provides them and thus are unwilling to support it. Perhaps if the diocese were split in to smaller more 'serviceable' units the connections between leaders and congregations would become stronger along with the monetary support for that leader's vision in formation with the congregation.

Questions 14, 15, 16 & 17 sum up quite well what is 'odd' or 'not hitting on all cylinders' about the Episcopal leadership. I don't hardly even know what those questions / answers mean, and I have a hard time swallowing (or keeping a straight face) about having to pick multiple choice answers that do not express even remotely how I see the Diocesan / congregational relationship. Leaders (Priests, Bishops, Diocesan administration) have their own very formulaic ideas about how things are & shall ever be, and it is very disheartening to me as a layperson in a small, barely cared for ragtag congregation!

The ghost of Bishop Whipple haunts this Diocese and the \$'s devoted to Indian Ministry need to be reviewed. Other communities need support like the Hmong and Hispanic and we have \$0 budgeted for these GROWING communities.

The future mission of the Diocese will succeed only if the focus of the Diocese goes back to God's work in this region and the intense dependency on and preoccupation with the money to do this ministry is abandoned. Constantly draining congregations of funds to support a Diocese that has no vision or programs is very detrimental. To further deplete the available funds for Diocesan purposes (Bishop's Circle and the like) without a concomitant devotion to building the church in Minnesota or a vision on how to do so, may doom the future mission of the Diocese in Minnesota. The fact that you are asking questions about the disappearance of the church and lack of any future demonstrates policies and expectations of failure. Note your expectations most often come true.

We need reconciliation between the Diocese and clergy and congregations, and we need a clear, unified strategy for mission. We have been handicapped by deficits in both of these critical elements for at least ten years.

We need to balance our financial and staff resources by not trying to do too much (everything for everybody). We need to focus our goals and mission to: Congregational Development in growing areas around the Twin Cities; a long-term Development/Stewardship program of planned and estate giving led by a professional that will improve the financial foundations of the Diocese over the next 5-20 years; continued financial and staff commitment to ministry among our minority/immigrant populations of Hispanic, Asian, African, Native American; to support and expand Total Ministry Teams in outstate Minnesota as a means of keeping many small churches alive for the potential of ministry in their small and mid-size towns.

There is great potential for the mission of the Episcopal Church in Minnesota in the 21st century rooted in our evangelical and catholic history. Sadly, I do not believe our Church can thrive as a denomination under the current episcopate. There is a crisis of confidence in Bishop Jelinek's leadership - a reluctance to take risks because of unmet promises, questionable practices, administrative secrecy, and a lack of consistent vision.

A major obstacle to growth is the large number of congregants who want to maintain a small intimate congregation. We have too many congregations whose leadership (lay and clergy) have squandered their endowments. We have too many clergy who are retiring in place and have allowed their congregations to exist to support the priest. We have too many congregations that are not able to sustain what they have (building, priest, etc) They need to look at radical change and restructuring. the clergy need to help lead this. I fear they won't because they may loose their stipendiary positions. We have lost the sense of Christianity as a movement. We have become too internally

focused believing, The Church exists to serve my needs, not the needs of my wider community. Our structures are work against mission: We have nice people who are warming seats in key places of church governance. Many do not have the capacity or vision for mission. Thus delegates to convention and the Diocesan Council have made these bodies weak systems. The COM does not have a clear focus on where the diocese is headed and therefore has become disconnected. Who are we ordaining and for what purpose? Finances of the Diocese are being depleted. (not the Pooled Investment Fund) Will there be funds to support a new vision? Where would this new money come from? Everyone needs to get on board with the work of the BCMS and speak and act with boldness, praying for the Spirit to speak and for us to have the courage to respond. This is where my hope lies and we have yet to determine whether or not all voices and leaders are in. Will we do this? Will we all agree to work together towards a new reality or will we cling to the old wineskin and continue to decline?

Take definite direction by stating the charter of Diocese of Minnesota. Make sure the charter has how the individual churches in the diocese relate to the diocese.

I am sorry to say I don't think the Church will survive in this State long term. There are viable options for those who leave the Church either because they are more conservative or more liberal. I don't see strong leadership from either the Bishop or Clergy and there is little interest in elevating the stature of the laity to cover the gap.

We need to think seriously about organizing a diocese into parts that would give more attention to outstate ministry and metro ministry. Thinking possibly of three dioceses 1. in the South, 2. in the metro and 3. in the North. Each dioceses employing a Bishop who is a rector of each new cathedral and a Bishop who would work out in the field.

'Up-from-the-ranks' clergy and Total Ministry are great, stop-gap ideas, but we still need fully trained priests to keep us on the spiritual path of the Episcopal Church. Without them, I sometimes feel I might as well go to the house church down the street!

The diocese must serve WITH the laity to seek and serve Christ in all people. The diocese should support faith filled camps/weekend experiences for families, teens and youth. The diocese should cut back on administrative expenses starting with the top down and focus on equipping laity to do the work of the church.

Sadly egos and personal needs get in the way of necessary clear and strong leadership which sustains current members and attracts new members.

We consistently do not talk to the leaders involved, but act on information gathered indirectly and never verified to check how accurate it is. We don't actually evaluate mission projects such as Ss Martha and Mary by talking with the lay and clergy leaders, nor do we work the hard numbers of development. It appears that none of the diocesan staff have read even the National Church Websites 'Ten Tops Things Not to Do with A Mission Starts'. There is no real, constructive supervision of clergy. We don't have the real capital to start new missions. I believe we have an excellent Bishop and diocesan staff. We do however need real tools to do mission work--this means cash for ads, staff, programs, and training. I am sick to death of the bad mouthing of anyone in authority. It is an excuse for not doing the work. Having served in several dioceses, this is one of the best. We need to get to a point of unity and GO FOR IT. Thanks for all the hard work going into this process.

The diocese keeps repeating the same mistakes every five years or so.

The diocese needs to move away from the traditional mission style where the priest becomes the only authority to a team-type mission ministry; congregations within closed city limits be encouraged to merge and new congregations be open in new and developing neighborhoods. Diocesan structures or organizations need to reflect the diversity of the diocese, rise above racial or ethnic marginalization and live by the true meaning of the much talked about 'inclusion.' Finally, spirituality must supersede entrepreneurship in its future mission.

The clergy of the Diocese, while collectively a wonderful group, are somewhat egotistical on the individual level. In MY experience, clergy personalities have caused the absence of my three adult children, and my three middle-aged siblings, to leave the church. I think part of our mission must be to train clergy for the personal needs of the people they are trying to reach, and to leave their own financial and professional goals at home.

The Diocese is not setup to help church's flourish (from my experience). The entire organization of an evangelical church is to plant the seed of a new church and help it grow. Our way seems to be tell a church it needs to grow, hope it happens, and shut them down when it doesn't.

The Diocese is a major consumer of money with little to show for it - except bureaucratic obfuscation. Unless this can be challenged and rethought, all the rest of the work will be for naught. I do not see in the plans a real look at the Diocese and see how it is - or is not - organized for mission!

Engaged as our congregation is in establishing Total Ministry as a means of being present in our community, I feel our current cataclysmic change of how we organize ourselves removes us in a substantial way from The Diocese of Minnesota. This new life in the church is necessary & I appreciate the reasons for it. ... As a former teacher in an Episcopal School I grieve for a time when education was a focus of our church.

Although we are not necessarily known today as 'The Republican Party at prayer' The Episcopal Church is, for the most part, quite elitist. When it comes to working as a corporate body, too many folks, like the Apostles, 'just don't get it.' Parochial concerns, while important, dominate and frustrate diocesan ambitions (left unfulfilled)

Before we discuss the current and future mission of the Diocese, the Diocese should be working at conducting daily tasks in an efficient, effective and timely manner: currently, phone calls are not always returned nor are emails answered in a timely fashion. Especially aggravating is that items sent by regular mail are lost, not answered (I have been waiting since May - it is October) and receipt of information has never, in my experience, been acknowledged. If the Diocese cannot conduct routine tasks well, how can it work on mission?

I feel the cost of running the Diocesan office is much too high. Because of this we are losing programs that have brought in people i.e. The University Episcopal Center, Cass Lake Camp. The Diocesan Music Camp gets no support. Do we have a department of Church development? If so, let's hear about it. The church should go where the people are. The outer ring around the Twin Cities is growing by leaps and bounds - where is the church in these areas? I could continue, but I would run out of paper ---

- People need to know more about the mission work done. Newsletters don't make them real enough. - People need to know how this Diocese's dollars are used - in a way that is real and meaningful to them - not just a mailing. - Our priority for spending

At present the current mission - I find to be disappointing. The future can be great if the Bishop and committees take a stronger interest in their members.

The mission of the diocese should be to encourage the congregations to grow and nurture the spiritual life of individuals. The diocese has not done this well. Instead it has interfered with the congregations efforts to nurture individuals seeking spiritual growth. The diocese should be working closely with the congregations, and extend its mission, by recognizing and encouraging new ideas and initiatives. Instead, the diocese has dictated to the congregations and refused to compromise. This has resulted in a reduction in the number of active Episcopalians willing to put in the effort to support the mission of the church. People will not work for a dictatorship, but will work for a mission that includes their input. The diocese must learn to compromise.

The regions need to be empowered to build cooperative mission work, leadership training, shared clergy, financial oversight and inter congregational support in all areas. Regional Deans, reporting to the Bishop, on program development, mission projects with the hope or replication of what works or might transfer to other regions. ACG should become a regional mission for the collective support of the Diocese and National Church. Priests should have Regional Ministries versus Congregational, except in program churches with attendance of not less than 130 per week or \$150,000 in operating revenues. Church properties should be downsized to reflect current needs and mission or service they render to their communities. Congregations should be required to budget 10% of their operating budgets to outreach in their community or region.

I have felt frustrated for years at the sense that diocesan leadership was dormant on this whole issue. All our resources seemed to be going to help declining parishes rather than to growing new churches in areas of population growth (mostly suburbs and exurbs of the Twin Cities.) In addition, there was no vision for strategy or sense of urgency. Finally, it looks like we are moving in the right direction - but only time will tell if this is to be a long-term, serious commitment or another failure.

I attended the big convention in Minneapolis a few years ago and was 'struck' by the elitist attitude of the bishops - I must say that the experience has left me questioning my involvement in the Episcopal Church. Overheard conversations about 'one of so and sos homes' and obviously very expensive clothing caused me to wonder at the motivation of our leaders. I was always under the impression that clergy went into that line of work because it was a calling to be Christ-like not to live high while others struggle. I feel embarrassed to support such a thing. Wasn't it Lenny Bruce who said (I'll paraphrase) Any man of the cloth who owns more than one suit is a charlatan. I Agree! It's worse than the Catholic Church

The book of common prayer should be used more. There is a disparity in churches in terms of money and especially membership growth. The National Church needs to make up its mind on the gay issue. We are wasting so much time on that issue, making us look indecisive and not focused on spirituality, service, etc. The Church seems to want to preserve our power as an institution.

Needs to be proactive, less costly to the churches. Fair Share reduction, i.e. then drastic cuts in the Diocese Staff

Our church building is renovated and beautiful now - but we need a congregational spiritual renovation. We used to have 5 EFM groups here but none now. (I graduated in 1986!) And not much outreach. Could use some priestly renovation too. Have a feeling the whole diocese needs one - how about starting with a diocese-wide EFM Study to set people afire, then a 'call to action' to realize the goals they would help to set. Use new technology to hook us up - maybe a grant from Trinity Wall Street or that station in Georgia or wherever it is. Offer it to the Lutherans and UCC also, especially in rural outstate. It could be the biggest fire since Hinckley... Oh - in #10 (page 4) I marked that I could not evangelize people. But - one thing enthusiastic EFMers could do, including myself, is get people into an EFM group and then they probably would 'self-evangelize.' A perfect Episcopal Solution! Think Sewanee could develop a curriculum for old EFMers (brushup 1-2 years) and teenagers/young adults that addresses their intellect/hearts. It could be combined with hands on service for extra punch & building esprit while doing something for others. I think EFM is one of the best tools we have to strengthen people & stir them up so they WANT to go do good work. The priests become advisors and cheering squad and put on a rousing Sunday performance to keep us going.

Need more pastoral care and leadership of diocesan office.

The Diocese of MN needs to be more proactive and visible to all churches; not just those in dire need. They also need to listen to the congregations and take action(s) sooner when there is a problem i.e. a priest who needs to be removed. It should not be so hard or take so long. Parishes suffer as a result.

... When the church, as a whole, works with the poor & oppressed, not for or over, we will have accomplished something. I mark personal relationship with Jesus at a five because this is such a loaded concept. I would rather see believers be-Jesus-with-shirt on. Quietly, powerfully, living in the midst of the world, where ever we are. The church should be about focusing efforts on, and preparing the people for, this daily bread. Engagement in my congregation leaves me chilled. There is a clique of powerful women and a manipulative priest who do everything very efficiently. The disparagement of the youth pastor & people who try leadership roles is disheartening. I am on the roster but only attend when kids have special events.

It is time for a new Bishop - 15 years is probably too long. Will we have an interim Bishop? Is there such a thing? It might not be a bad idea - one that would help the Diocese through the 'process' of searching for a new Bishop: helping us find the way we want to go - decide what's the most important and looking for someone gifted in the things we consider important.

I am not clear as to the role of the Diocese of Minnesota. The mission of the Diocese of Minnesota has not been defined in our church. Communication could be improved. It has been many years since the bishop has visited our church. Our vestry is floundering without a lot of direction from the Diocese of Minnesota. Our church is only surviving because of several lay people giving of their time and energy. It would be a shame for rural churches to be forgotten. I would rather see region programs be implemented rather than churches closed. I have no idea of the needs of our region parishes - better communication is needed!

Category 5: Challenge of Changing Demographics and Declining Membership

Responses to Greatest Challenge Facing the Episcopal Church in MN

Church growth. I believe we must reach out with more than words to struggling parishes and to do all we are able to do to explore means of growth, pastoral care, and spreading the Good News.

Aging and shrinking congregations in a post-denominational society.

Declining membership in an increasingly secular world

Loss of members and turning many parishes into mission churches.

Declining membership

Declining membership, very small churches with very limited resources

Increasing membership.

declining numbers of members

The decline of congregational life and the lack of Episcopal Church presence in so much of the state.

Sustaining its existence.

Because we have decreased in numbers by one-third during the past 25 or so years we must begin to proclaim why the via media [middle way] is a viable option for Christians.

Staying in business

Dwindling membership

Maintaining membership

Aging congregations.

Maintaining sufficiently active and sizable memberships in the various parishes of the Diocese to sustain the viability of the Diocese and its programs. (Example - I understand that the Cass Lake Episcopal Camp - a beautiful facility, though greatly in need of upkeep - was not really 'open for business' this past summer because of budgetary constraints. No church camping weeks or weekends were held; this fine facility, which could afford such wonderful spiritual retreats, sat idle. I take this as a sign that the Diocese is not as strong, in numbers and in dollars, as it has been in the past.)

The continual decline of small congregations in rural MN

Shrinking churches - having to close these smaller churches or help them join together with other smaller parishes. Helping these churches see the benefit in total ministry and or joining forces. Too many of these struggling parishes have single ownership which is hurting their growth. Unwilling to change. Diocese needs to make some difficult decisions for the greater good.

We are closing churches and accepting shrinking membership. We do not plant or form new churches in expanding population areas of the diocese. Nor does the Diocese encourage churches or regions to do this either.

Keeping missions and parishes from dwindling in number.

Membership growth

Increasing individual church membership and participation.

GETTING MORE MEMBERS AT OUR CHURCH AND KEEPING THEM.

Geographical vastness of Minnesota compared to number of Episcopalians

Declining numbers and individual churches sinking alone and not forming bonds and community across their traditional, historical borders.

Staying vibrant as a viable community with a clear mission, but we need more members!

Declining membership

Declining membership in building that are impossible to maintain creating a sense of despair

Diminishing in size not knowing its history in Minnesota

Achieving a presence in the states fastest growing areas.

Getting more people for members

Keeping afloat

Declining membership leading to financial weakness and irrelevance

Not dealing with declining membership in many of the churches. The diocese should focus resources on poor or declining churches.

Declining numbers & attendance - no good communication between churches - sister parishes - would be good - not so thru Diocesan offices which seems to bog down progress

In my church I often feel weighed down with the small amount of people trying to carry out the many good ideas and suggestions being raised. I don't want to silence the creative process but it seems like sometimes new committees and projects are springing up without a bird's eye view of balancing our priorities and resources. Our congregation is shrinking and there is a tremendous pressure. I think this experience is probably common - perhaps we could collaborate more?

Population decline - rural churches - greater MN Rural Church can face this with a Team Ministry

Membership

Loss, rather than growth, of smaller regional parishes

Retaining its membership

The demographic of strong RC & ELCA membership. We combine their appeal without the strong pull of family culture/tradition

Mission and members

Category 5: Challenge of changing demographics and declining membership

Open-Ended Comments about the Current and Future Mission of the Episcopal Church in MN

I am glad to see we are addressing things that have held us back because I don't want to see any more churches close; I want to see them grow!

The Diocese of Minnesota is at a crucial crossroads. The current state of affairs cannot continue or most of the rural congregations will die out in 5-7 years. If new members do not appear in one way or another, we will be left with no one to minister to and the result will probably be 'home churches each Sunday' for the faithful remnant.

Does the Episcopal Church have a future in Minnesota? We have opened one church in the last forty years. Does this not show where our future is?

With few members to start with many Parishes are growing older rapidly. Need more attractive programs for age group 35-55 to start a building process. More user friendly relationship between our Bishop and the Parishes. Present ourself to the public as a normal Christian other than the elite. Encouragement of more males for seminary training in a few years most all priests will be female. Stay away from the gay marriage issue.

I think we need to concentrate on increasing our membership. We need more members!

Category 6: Need for church planting and church growth techniques and strategies

Responses to Greatest Challenge Facing the Episcopal Church in MN

Working on the present day mission of the church with real integrity, while attending to the reality of the long terms responsibilities of a diocese in a healthy way.

We must grow or we will die

Planting new parishes in key growth areas of Minnesota

Growing our membership

Moving from maintenance-oriented to mission-oriented

Greatest challenge is growing the church in membership by expanding the infrastructure and paying the bills with the existing members at the same time. This puts a financial strain on the members and creates squabbling and longing for the 'good old days'. It has to be 'If we build it larger more will come.' The successful soul searching necessary to come up with the funds, will transform the congregation for the good.

Growth - both in membership of individual congregations, and in the development of new congregations in areas of population growth within the diocese. Right now, we're in a period of stagnation in each of those areas.

Implementing strategies and methods for growing our churches-both spiritually and in numbers and diversity of members. We are often too stuffy and traditional in our liturgy and that makes it hard to attract more young and contemporary people to our parishes.

Decreasing numbers in most churches and a lack of clearly defined outreach/charity goals.

Evangelism: growing current congregations and creating new ones.

We must reverse our trend of shrinking membership and grow the church throughout the state.

Evangelism. I firmly believe that we are so caught up with maintaining our glorious buildings that we have forgotten that they were built for the communities they serve. We need to be a part of our community.

Keeping its core membership and using that core to develop growth,

Our focus is too much on discernment, visioning, listening, processing, talking, re-imagining. Blah, blah, blah: work avoidance. Get to work and start some new churches!

Creating an environment within the context of Church that upholds and honors our Episcopal traditions, yet welcomes and encourages new, emerging and accessible ideas related to ministry, mission and liturgy.

building churches in growing areas of the state and doing so in such a way as to insure their success by funding them adequately and staffing them appropriately.

Growth--We seem more interested in eliminating smaller parishes than fostering new parishes or nurturing those that are struggling.

Congregational growth

Evangelism/Mission

The diocese needs to convince all congregations that it is important to give the full amount of financial assessment due to the diocese every year. Then these funds are to be used wisely to further develop new congregations in growing areas in the state.

Continued growth with the next generations. Identifying what we can do and getting it done.

The Diocese needs to decide on a goal and have action plans in place to make sure that this goal is met. Just talking (or writing it down) doesn't help if no one is walking the walk.

We need to be more committed to help people deepen their spiritual lives and go grow as a church

Supporting/revitalizing the mission of local churches.

Starting new churches in areas of population growth, such that they become self sustaining.

building congregations

Having a clear sense of mission, especially in growing areas, and amongst the marginalized.

revitalization of some failing parishes, growth in new areas is needed.

Keeping congregations on the edge alive and well. To find ways of keeping clergy well and not overwhelmed.

Lack of growth. Why no new churches?

DEVELOPING A DIOCESEAN-WIDE STRATEGY FOR TOTAL MINISTRY

Growing all congregations not just big metro area.

Funding, supporting, and enthusiastically planting and growing parishes in rapidly growing areas of the seven county metro area.

Growing

Growing at a sufficient rate to be able to carry out our mission.

Getting congregations from survival mode to thriving where the Gospel can be spread.

Keep church memberships growing

We have many gifted priests in Minnesota. But, sometimes I wonder if many of them approach their ministries as 'jobs' and their parish's members as 'resources' or 'employees/staff members' as if the parish is a workplace/job site/employer. No matter how reluctant or non-responsive parish members seem, it is for their growth that the priest should be primarily interested.

Congregational Development and to grow the Church, particularly in areas where population is increasing rapidly, with the limited financial and staff resources that we have in the Diocese of Minnesota.

Developing effective strategies for revitalization and growth

Strategy to grow our parishes by increasing outreach programming. Too much complacency in the pews!

Growth

Keeping the young people energized and interested as well as a strategy for growth bearing in mind how diverse the population has become.

Maintaining and growing membership

The lack of growth in both urban and rural congregations

Growing church memberships. We must not sway from our belief that God loves everyone and we, as a church, will welcome all. We need to keep in the forefront, 'The Episcopal Church Welcomes You,' and not only put up the signs, but develop that welcoming spirit in ourselves. When we are judged by others outside the Episcopal church to be too embracing of diverse thoughts, it makes it difficult to grow our churches. When that judgment comes from within, it is nearly impossible to grow. The public image of GLTB rights has become a misleading identifier for our church. Because it is such a polarized issue and our church has made unpopular choices (to many), we have to reestablish our image to the general public.

Congregational development/collaboration in the face of dwindling financial resources.

Growth - the diocese needs to help the church grow not the church help the diocese grow. When the church grows then the diocese will grow...not vise-versa

Grow => at the diocesan level as well as helping individual parishes grow

Helping churches grow while starting new congregations

We are unwilling to analyze and implement strategies as to why we do not reach the spiritual needs of contemporary culture

Change to a form of outward growth which will automatically help us grow within

Mission and growth

Our tradition & not moving away from it - we live for history not the future. Clergy watching their own territory Lack of training for ministers on how to lead for growth.

Line d above - We lack strategies and methods for growing our churches

Membership growth Evangelizing more vigorously

To face the needs of our parishes!!

We need to help our churches grow

Developing a practical plan for growth and cooperative mission between congregations expanding the roll of regions for cooperative creative growth strategy.

Growth and Outreach

Growing congregations - & retaining them

Growth

Church Growth

Growth

Growth

Attracting new people

Closing some very small urban churches in order to move into growing suburban areas where we have no churches

Letter D above We lack strategies and methods for growing our churches

How to bring in new members and keep them

Stop the shrinkage of the church and determine clear strategies and goals for growth

To be an encouraging 'agent/factor' for individual parishes/missions in their own desires and aspirations

Church growth - we are shrinking in numbers.

Major divide between Diocese & Congregations. We have no idea how to attract & grow

Category 6: Need for church planting and church growth techniques and strategies

Open-Ended Comments about the Current and Future Mission of the Episcopal Church in MN

The growth of Total ministry congregations is another exciting and hopeful sign to me of the movement of the Spirit in mission in the diocese in new and exciting directions. This has brought new life to our congregation.

We keep strategizing and mandating mission priorities that are unfunded and only vaguely defined. We need a clear, concise, consistent strategy with achievable goals and measurable outcomes. We are all wanting to be about 'the Mission of God,' but that has many vagaries and caprices. We need a strategy that will engage, enlighten and empower Episcopalians across the diocese to do the work that God has given us to do. Posturing and politicking for recognition has no place in it. What will we say when Jesus asks us, 'What were you arguing about on the road?'

Transform congregations through programs like 'Health Realization' and Caim Community. Let's look at what sounds true and brings health to people in real small group community.

I believe we should focus our efforts very strongly on marketing, fundraising, and church growth in order to express the gifts God has given us to more effectively and efficiently serve God's people.

The concept of Total Ministry, what it is, what it has done, and what it has the possibility of doing needs to be infused into ALL of the parishes in our diocese.

We need to regain institutional health across the Diocese. We need to grow membership just to regain financial health. We need to gain membership to be able to reach out to the unchurched and disenfranchised. We have to have a clear recruiting plan with specific target populations and specific membership growth numbers. We are fading away.

I think we have a bright future, but we need more efforts at evangelism and outreach, as well as training to be able to communicate our somewhat complex message and theology.

We need a comprehensive strategy that involves buy in and participation by/from the congregations...the diocesan leadership have proven they can't impose their vision and have it work

This action should have been started several years ago, we are in real trouble. The people from the Diocese need to visit each church real soon and get the word out that help is on its way. We cannot not afford to have any more churches close.

We must find a way and a plan to grow our churches and make them stronger and to realize that parishioners that do not embrace homosexuality are not the enemy. We have to understand who the majority and the minority are in our congregations.

I am a believer in the Bishop's Commission on Mission Strategy and its direction. By identifying our strengths and weaknesses, we can put together a plan to thrive and grow. Today, as a member of a recent congregation who has taken the steps to move toward Total Ministry, I look to the Diocese for help and guidance as we welcome all to our doors.

Thank you. No program = No growth. Just as the clergy helps a lay person to discover their spiritual gifts for use in ministry, the Diocese should deploy and lend itself in helping churches (training, working along side of, and raising up) discern what the Spirit is calling them to be and do.

The Cursillo movement some twenty-five years ago brought our region and our local congregation a way to find spiritual renewal. It has probably outlived its usefulness, but I personally wish there was something like that to help my spiritual journey at this time of my life in MN.

In my view, the Diocese should take major steps to bring the church to the suburbs. That is where the population is growing. The fundamentalist churches minister to that population. Yet the suburban population probably contains many people who would love to join a church like ours, if they knew about it and its attributes. The Episcopal church has an immense amount to offer in the city as well. But it keeps its openness, tolerance, and respect for learning secret.

We seem to be at a stand still without an idea as to where to grow. Is there a plan for future mission churches? There are many areas of new population growth with out churches. Also, the Presbyterians are far ahead of us in serving the senior population. Do we have a mission there?

I am pleased that the Diocese is analyzing church growth as a whole. Much of the growth that happens in our parish is the result of transfers from other Episcopal parishes. That's fine but does not add to the net strength of the Diocese. This initiative will lead us to ask tough questions about where to focus our resources. That will require the Diocese to say 'no' to some deserving members, but should in the long run be good for us all. I hope the Bishop and Diocesan leaders will be bold in responding.

The expanding growth of population towards St. Cloud is not being addressed. Episcopal Church coverage is very sparse--Monticello and Hassan Township churches were closed, for example.

Focus on church growth, attendance, outreach, ministry to all.

We need to find a way to stop the current downward spiral and start rebuilding the Diocese.

The diocese needs to help the local churches grow or we may die. At convention all the talk was on growing the diocese based on new church growth. PLEASE help the local church to find their need in the communities and how to grow and spread the news of Jesus Christ.

The Diocese needs to become a stronger prophetic witness to the richness of diversity and the possibility of reconciliation in the world. We need to think and ACT, not just talk and study. We need to look beyond our own

denominational boundaries for ways to build healthy, vital congregations where all the members understand themselves as and are equipped to be the primary ministers in the world and church. We need healthier diocesan and congregational leadership committed to collegiality. We need to re-imagine the way we are and 'do' church and liturgy.

As a junior warden, I have seen little assistance from the diocese. I wish there was a dept. there who could provide us with resources & referrals about welcoming new members. It's very discouraging to work so hard on our ministries & to feel we can't get the vital help we need & to cringe whenever we hear the word 'diocese.'

We need to set measurable mini goals that get successively more difficult

Making any change as suggested by this questionnaire would be a step in the right direction. Example - a jazz mass would really help a lot.

Looking forward to the acceptance of the Total Ministry process going on in our small congregation and how we can all participate in it.

As a practical practice, in days gone by, clergy OUTFRONT and with 'lay where applicable'. Knocking on doors would make sense but difficult to reach the unchurched. Present time...Maybe.

I am concerned that we have started no new congregations since I have been in Minnesota. I'm saddened each time I drive through prosperous, fast growing communities such as Maple Grove without an Episcopal presence.

We need to discern 3 or 4 clear, definitive strategies for growth in order for the Diocese to be able to exercise strong, overall leadership. The foot soldiers of the church need this leadership, which will not be strong & effective if clear strategies (i.e., statements of intent) are not established and used to formulate a limited number of goals or tactics. These goals/tactics need to be action oriented vs. 'becoming' oriented. We need to be able to know objectively when we are successfully doing the tactics or reaching the goals.

Two weeks ago I attended an Episcopal Church with a congregation of 3000. It is vitally alive. From my observations I would suggest: - heart warming greetings & interest in a newcomer or guest - enthusiastic greeters at all entrances & exits - a wide choice for mission - active, on going participation & leadership of lay persons - at each service a short but articulate expression of the person's reason for becoming a Christian & choosing to be a member of that congregation - an open arms acceptance of all in attendance with no exceptions - an excellent choir - many programs of various interest led by dedicated & enthusiastic lay people - an atmosphere of love & joy

Category 7: Equipping members to respond to community needs and share their faith

Responses to Greatest Challenge Facing the Episcopal Church in MN

To stop thinking its purpose is to continue its own existence rather than to join in God's mission in the world

Membership We need to get our members to be more active and grow the church and be active in our communities

Equipping both laity and clergy to live out our Baptismal Covenant in all aspects of our lives which will result in a strong mission of sharing the Good News of God in Christ, strengthening our communities locally and nationally and with the Anglican Communion as a whole.

We are too busy trying to decide what our ministry is and how much to pay our clergy rather than doing ministry

I'm involved in Loaves and Fishes, feeding the homeless at two locations in the Twin Cities. I also visit prisoners. I see daunting, frightening challenges for our community in these two areas. I believe we can do more and will be challenged to do more. Matthew 25

Learning to work together to use the gifts of all for the benefit of all. We are too competitive among congregations and too adversarial between the congregations and the diocese.

We need to come together in community to serve God through the love of Christ. We need to stop being afraid of can we afford it and look at our community as showing Christ's love in all we are and do.

To bring all baptized persons into their ministry to the world through catechesis, for our laity and clergy to take education seriously, to stop being a hospital for the hurting and start being a sender of disciples

Holding to Jesus' call for compassion, love and social justice.

Engaging people in the reconciling work of Christ

To - with HUMILITY and PATIENCE - reach out in love to every person, regardless of how different they may be from us, and then to recognize the gifts they bring to change how we operate as Episcopalians. Self satisfaction will eventually bring us to extinction.

On an individual level, I don't think we invite enough people to church. And when we do, and they come, what is there to offer? People are going in so many directions and lead such fractured lives, church just becomes 'one more thing on the schedule' rather than something that is looked forward to, energizing and meaningful. There are a lot of lonely people out there, hurting people -- how can we speak to them and invite them in?

Get out there and do something worthwhile

Equipping the laity to be strong leaders in ministry by changing attitudes toward personal ministry, i.e., by becoming active members of the 'priesthood of believers' and developing a message that incorporates both the traditional and the new emerging liturgies that this 'priesthood of believers' can use to attract unchurched people to Christ and to the Church.

Meeting the needs of the immigrant populations in Minnesota

I believe that we have to adapt to the changing face of society. I also believe that we have to step up to the plate as the various forms of government cease to help the disenfranchised. I guess that I really believe that we have to take inclusiveness seriously, especially regarding the poor and ill and elder citizens.

Too much top-down directive and emphasis on programs 'by the diocese'. The main emphasis should be in building up existing congregations in such a way as to motivate and equip the individuals in those congregations for ministry.

To remain an inclusive community where new generations and new populations can find a spiritual home and become equipped for their ministries in the world.

The need to empower people, lay and clergy, for ministry.

The ability to break out of our places of safety; our buildings, our accoutrements, our too-often white, middle class congregations. To meet God and Christ in inner city streets and rural canning plants and other places where we are stretched beyond our comfort levels. At least from my experience, conversion begins when we, like Francis, dare to 'kiss the leper.' Then we are broken open, and God can use us for God's mission.

I think one of our greatest challenges is to motivate and train our members to become active ministers of the true message of Christ.

To make our members more fully committed to the mission of the church and to get them to act accordingly

The mentoring of total ministry teams is essential to the survival of those teams. The total ministry team at St. James in Marshall is causing people to leave and find other places of worship. The team is an exclusive club and the parishioners are left out when before the parishioners were a vital part of the church. Members of the congregation have been 'let go' and are no longer treated like vital let alone welcome at St. James. It is very difficult to survive spiritually in this community let alone ask some one outside into this community.

Boldly proclaiming the unifying spirit of the Eucharist in accepting and empowering all people to act as God's agents in the world.

Our churches need to equip members for lay ministry to both energize the diocese and respond to the reality that the church, as it exists today, is not responding to the needs of its members, the community, or the world in the way in which God calls us.

Equipping members to go out into the world and advocate for peace and justice.

Never wavering in our efforts to share Christ's love

Having a vision for the Gospel of Jesus Christ in this area. We are doing 'church', but we are not transforming ourselves or society.

Equip leadership of congregations to in turn equip all the baptized in their ministries; congregational vitality and development

The Episcopal Diocese in Minnesota must break out of the 'Christendom' mindset, in which Christianity is the norm (particularly for those in positions of secular power). That mindset fosters complacency. The Diocese must start to behave like an institution on the margins of society and be prepared to take chances. Offering hospitality, giving testimony, pursuing justice, facilitating reconciliation -- it is risky business that needs to be done in Minnesota, and I don't see that the members of the Episcopal Church in the Diocese are equipped to do it.

Getting churches to be open and welcoming in their communities; getting church members to participate in the life of their communities and encourage communities to use their church, to feel welcome in their church.

The biggest challenge facing the Diocese is to serve the parishes of the Diocese and help them be better equipped and trained to bring people to a knowledge of Jesus Christ.

We need to welcome Episcopal Community Services back and support them as our outreach. Folks do not understand that we do outreach. We need to do a better job of serving the underserved - single mothers, the poor and impoverished, the destitute, people in prisons, the elderly - and not just pay lip service to their needs. So many of our parishes are so small that they begin to wonder if what they are doing is making a difference. Jesus said, 'whatever you do for the least of these, you do for me.' We need to become a ministry of doing, not just a ministry of museum keepers.

Equipping members to spread the Good News in their communities.

Clarity and conviction for mission that will enable the Diocese to be a strong partner with our brothers and sisters in Christ in the work of proclaiming God's reign powerfully and peacefully in our increasingly pluralistic society

To grow our church through dynamic interaction in social justice work, through living Jesus' gospel message of loving and serving the poor and marginalized and oppressed. Also, help us realize that our diverse perceptions are formed through experience and culture and God is greater in love and mercy than our limited minds can conceive.

Keeping the people we have so they can be educated to spread the news.

COURAGE IN WITNESS

Outreach! Outreach! Outreach! We are here to serve rather than to be served

Truly following our Christian mission to help the 'poor' and those on the fringes instead of wasting countless hours on 'non core' issues.

Serving the poor, rehab of ex offenders

Sharing God's Love

Finding a consensus about our role in each congregation, and making this a cohesive part of the diocese. We need to work together to achieve our goal of community service and evangelism

Being effective in leading people to Christ

The moral issues at the national level affect us all. Getting excited and doing outreach

As in #10 - bringing people (importantly our non church going members) into a life-transforming relationship with Jesus as Savior & Lord so they will want to serve those in need in their daily lives.

To be more public and active advocates for the poor

Reservation needs - reaching the people

Providing services for community residents

Category 7: Equipping members to respond to community needs and share their faith

Open-Ended Comments about the Current and Future Mission of the Episcopal Church in MN

Our future mission is to: Preach the good news.

It's time to really get into action and stop the constant self-evaluation. If something real doesn't come out of this current attempt at evaluation and planning, I am afraid we will continue to decline, until there is nothing vital left.

As an optimist, I have great hope for our current and future mission. Based on the path set by Bishop Whipple, I believe we will continue to serve those with the greatest needs and we will continue to stand up for those who are outcasts. I also believe we must not only serve but we must place all people on an equal level -- so that we worship with and share meals with and hold hands and be with all people.

I'm very hopeful for the church in Minnesota. There are a lot of talented people--lay, clergy, and episcopes--who, working together, could do a lot for the people of Minnesota (the state). We have a lot to offer against staggering odds (preponderance of the Lutheran and RC population; not much money to do coordinated state-wide mission work). Let's get out there and do the work we're all called to do in Christ.

Concerning the Native American population: I didn't see a presence when the young man killed his classmates. We should have been there.

To be God's hands, feet, and voice in the world and to do so in a proper fashion.

I am a member of a Total Ministry Congregation, and with Total Ministry the empowering of our individual parish members is awesome. Personally, I find strength and hope in the Episcopal traditions--they are for real people struggling with the real world.

The Diocese does seem to be in a state of 'unknown.' I know that growth has been talked about but am not sure it has happened. I wonder if maybe we are trying to hard to grow and not providing what people in today's world really need.....security, community, support, etc.

Need a greater sense of evangelical warmth in the midst of catholic tradition. Need greater warmth from priests in particular and sense of the dynamic possibilities in being a member of the EC. We can't solve all social issues but select a few that we can make a difference in. Principal purpose of the church still should be to transform our laity who in turn are better positioned to transform the world than clergy.

We need to be concerned less about church buildings and more about mission in the church. We also need to look beyond this diocese to our role in concert with the rest of the Anglican Communion, recognizing the importance of all social justice issues. We need to actively engage people and issues around the Anglican Communion, not just with financial aid, but with awareness, understanding, compassion, and relationship to work together to solve world problems.

Be leaders and regard all people worthy

We need to do more to reach out to others in the state of Minnesota

The Diocese needs to get rid of the obstacles that keep people guessing about what is happening today....Serve the local parish so the local parish can serve the local community, let them keep their financial resources so they can do the job in their local area serving that local community

I think that we probably have a pretty good base to build our church on. Even as a lifelong Episcopalian, I feel I don't know much about the diocese and its role. I don't feel informed about the diocese and the programs offered to the members. I think there could be a better way to inform us what the mission is and how we can participate beyond our church homes. I know there are publications out there for me to learn more about the diocese and the national church, as well as websites, but what I'm in need of are ways to grow in my faith journey within the Episcopal Church. I think we keep so much of these opportunities hidden and that when someone is ready to learn more/grow in faith they sometimes leave the Episcopal Church because they don't realize these things can be found within. I found some of these questions were worded in ways that made me want to write a response to explain myself more. I don't know if I gave 'true' responses because I had more to say. We have a responsibility to the world around us. We cannot hide within the walls of our church and hope that the world will be okay. We can't be blind to our neighbors. We must be trained to understand our gifts of the spirit and then be taught how to use those gifts for the good of the world. I have many thoughts about God and who He is in the Episcopal Church. We have a lot of work to continue to

do to live the lives that He designed. I want to learn and grow and if this process of discernment for our diocese is something I can make a difference in, be a part of, grow with, I am willing.

We must to learn that our Lord needs our effort just to grow of Church we must to give more time in the community to have a strong Church.

The convention was great and positive. We must now go out and spread the Word. Talk about what we believe and take action. People are watching us.

I believe the Diocese should encourage the participation of each congregation and individual to work to bring to their communities encouragement to seek a close relationship with God and to put into action that expression - education, social action - in other words, a care of everyone, as mandated by Jesus Christ.

Return to a society that has concern for each other.

Category 8: Need for greater focus on rural and small congregations

Responses to Greatest Challenge Facing the Episcopal Church in MN

Deciding which small congregations are vital enough to be helped to survive, and which are not. The number of members in our church is great, but we need financial assistance to provide necessary services to them.

The diocese is too big. The smaller, outstate churches tend to feel lonely and congregationalist.

In our church as in many others it is an aging population that some how missed the boat in maintaining young people as they matured. ... I do feel that as a rural church that does it thing that we have had very little attention from the Diocese in the ten plus years I have been active.

Attracting new members in rural congregations is a big issue. These congregations are struggling and even with Total Ministry, the needs of many are not being met. Young people are not attracted to our church. Something needs to be done to keep them Episcopalians and to attract those who have never been churchied.

Supporting struggling rural and small-town congregations.

From my perspective, we are two dioceses: Urban and rural. The rural is strong and getting stronger with Total Ministry. The urban is self-serving and pessimistic and lacks direction.

The lack of trust and support between congregations and the episcopate especially relating to most congregations in the non metro area who have the long held feeling that outstate is invisible because of distance.

Addressing the health, strength, and pastoral/priestly needs of the many and diverse small churches outside the urban, Twin Cities area.

Supporting struggling congregations in growth and mission, so that the denomination doesn't become irrelevant.

Growing small congregations and bringing new people to the Episcopal faith.

The out state churches need a lot of help and input from the Diocese. The Bishop needs to realize that the small church cannot support the financial needs he recommends for the payment to priests. It really hurts to see your church lose ground each year. The Press hasn't helped us much either. I'm glad to see that we are finally going to try to work together.

Meeting the needs of the smaller congregations as they face financial and spiritual declines which affect their ministry.

Keeping members active to support smaller congregations.

Not everything in the Diocese revolves around the Twin Cities churches. Parishes need to know and recognize the importance of the ACG. Everyone who claims to be an Episcopalian need to understand how the church operates and the importance of Diocese and National Church.

Big city vs rural

Maintaining congregations in smaller towns. They don't need expensive buildings and full time priests, but we lose members every time a small or rural congregation closes. House churches or preaching stations can continue without too much expense. Nobody should have to drive 60 or 80 miles to an Episcopal Church.

Small churches, especially mission churches, feel the financial pinch more acutely than more well-off churches. They are being threatened by the Diocese with either closure or loss of clergy, which is bad for the morale of the congregation. Having to talk about financial rather than spiritual concerns every Sunday drives people away, including potential new members.

To have a Bishop that takes the rural churches' needs just as seriously as an urban setting.

The growth & development of the Episcopal Church - especially in rural areas

To foster help in the spiritual revival of small congregations in the Diocese

How to assist small churches, whether rural or urban

Dominance of 'urban' thinking - ignoring 'outstate' remnants that struggle to survive in benign neglect.

Involvement with the lesser churches

Maintain a base in outstate communities. Meet the needs of many diverse groups.

Category 8: Need for greater focus on rural and small congregations

Open-Ended Comments about the Current and Future Mission of the Episcopal Church in MN

I believe that a great deal is said regarding ministry with and for Native people, but that is not being translated into reality. Our reservation mission churches are scattered and poorly lead. People attend church on a hit and miss basis and do not often take an active role in education of children, and outreach beyond the mission. Parish meals are nice, but there is so much more that needs to be addressed and acted upon

Our parish may well find partnering with a local Lutheran church to be the solution to our survival. I wonder how common this is in MN, whether anyone has ever tried it. We ARE in communion with them, but I am not aware of any encouragement that we should link our survival to theirs. I would think that small towns might have tried this already; it SHOULD work.

As a member of a rural congregation that does not seem to grow, I am not optimistic about our future. It is discouraging. I would like the Diocese to pay more attention to us. Total Ministry alone is not the answer, at least for some of us.

We MUST stop closing small congregations. We need a church in the SW suburbs. We have a church in Belle Pain that their historical society opens once a year. What else is there between St Albans, Edina and St John's, Mankato? Where the church is determines where I live. Others may not be so fortunate as to be able to pick where they live. Congregations are no longer able to build a church and pay a priest. In order to grow a congregation this problem is must be solved. The diocese needs to consider how to supply one or the other so that missions can begin to flourish. A new bishop will not help unless the attitude of the episcopate changes to realize that ALL of Minnesota makes up the diocese and needs to be a part of the councils of the church.

We Minnesotans need to look at the whole state. We are not just a metro church we are a rural church as well. We need to attend to everyone's needs. I would venture to say that we as state communion need to pull together a little bit and work less as a communion and more as a denomination.

I hope we can come to realize that God does not care about the rules as much as he cares about the ministry. As a Diocese, we should focus on all congregations and what they bring to the spreading of the Word and not just focus on the churches in the metro. We in the outer rim of the Diocese, are doing incredible ministry and changing lives, and making a difference, although sometimes small changes and differences, in the lives of the lost and oppressed. If we are to be a Diocese for all people we have to place first the importance of outreach to all areas of the Diocese and address issues on a one to one basis. Also, this Diocese is so large that there should be more staff to cover the northern areas, south western areas and the south eastern areas. Metro areas are fortunate to have more support at a closer distance to each other. We feel like we are the last to know anything!

I think the Diocese should support the individual churches financially and let them donate to the worthy causes in their communities. Without the Diocese help there is little or no hope for the small rural churches.

There's hope for the future but it can't reside solely in the twin cities.

I have lived in other dioceses. I live in the north. We have our population and economic issues, but we have some vital mission and ministry happening. Total ministry is all around, reaching the rural areas and even a suburban area here in Hermantown. We have a new Native American mission start out of the ashes of the closed St. Edwards. Episcopalians in Duluth and the Iron Range offer unique contributions to the area. They began the first hospital in town to serve men losing their lives alone and neglected, St. Luke's. That legacy of working in areas of jail and neighborhood, youth, Hmong refugees, and children's needs continues. We are not afraid to address gender and environmental/ science and medical ethics issues, as well and continued outreach to children and minorities. It is always harder to be poor in the cold, and perhaps that has tempered us to create communicate and thrive. For the Ojibwe of the region, winter is the wisdom growing and testing time. Stories are told to encourage people to survive. It is also a give away time when some may sacrifice to feed the young. I have lived here 24 years and am not afraid or whine about driving across the state to meetings. I claim Bishop Whipple and Marji of the movie, Fargo, which we all know was Brainerd. Oh well, I get to live up here. There is only one full time clergy position in the entire region, so we have to more Total Ministry than some places anyway even if it is not so named.

Am very happy they are getting it out of the 'metro'. This has the potential to be the best thing we have done in recent years. Don't let it get too bogged down as the session was at Breck School. I came away from there in nearly total despair!

THOSE ON THE MARGIN NEED OUR MINISTRY FOCUS: THE GAY/ LESBIAN COMMUNITY, THE NATIVE AMERICAN COMMUNITY, THE SMALL STRUGGLING CONGREGATIONS IN RURAL AND SMALL TOWNS.

I am concerned that there has been an effort to reduce the number of small churches rather than working to grow them. I realize the inefficiencies of the small churches, but this is how congregations start. Very seldom do you start with 200-500 member units.

Frankly, I don't know what we are up to. Everything seems to be in the metropolitan areas, primarily the Twin Cities. If a meeting is scheduled for the south, it is often in Mankato. I can get to Minneapolis faster. Most appointed people are from the Twin Cities. Most coverage in the newsletter is about the Twin Cities.

Growth in numbers is so difficult in the congregations in small towns but growth in strength of spirit is really possible and occurs regularly!

I have faith that the Diocese of MN will continue with their mission, however, I feel the smaller parishes need a larger voice.

A major piece needs to be supporting/partnering with the parishes that are shrinking as well as opening new ones

I have great concern for the future of the churches in rural Minnesota. I believe that strong leadership along with a directed plan can lead to a positive turn. Rural MN churches need to be identified and recognized in order to move forward

The Diocese of Minnesota needs to serve the smaller churches in a more significant manner

Our Diocese embraces different communities through mission, but doesn't seem to have a plan to fold these missions into the larger church.

It is good that you did this survey - Thank you. Small churches feel burdened. In years past, the Bishop came to visit regularly and we confirmed in 'home parish.' We need youth emphasis through music, participation, YPF etc. Where does our money go? Certainly not to the local level. Could more volunteering be available to stimulate growth of younger families? Perhaps we need 'out reach' to small churches!

As you can tell from my response to this survey, I can see little hope for the Episcopal Church, if X parish is typical. We seem to be more concerned for the building and dogma of the church than the people in it. I also feel very disappointed and remiss that neither can I offer any serious suggestions for improvement: we need new blood but are indifferent to the one thing needed most, youthful attraction!

I feel that the Diocese is completely out of touch with the needs of struggling congregations. Why plant new churches when so many are in desperate need? Strengthen existing congregations, then investigate 'planting' new ones. We need a lot of help.

I believe the mission of the Diocese is to support local parishes. Most people are aware of what their diocese does in Outreach, inreach, and spiritual guidance of its members. The work of the Minnesota Diocese is known mostly by those who attend the conventions and work directly with Diocesan officials. Thank you for the opportunity of participating in this survey.

Concentrate on developing and inspiring local congregations.

More attention needs to be paid to out of the Metro Churches. No one should be excluded from the life of the church. We need to minister to all people. We need to find new ways to attract the young families and students. I believe we are lax in what we offer them. It seems that most of the Episcopal Churches in Rural areas are full of 'grey Heads'. Many resist change.

The Diocese must listen to, adapt, change and work better with each individual parish to meet their needs. More of the income of the diocese needs to go to the churches of MN that are most in need - needs more support staff.

Not enough is done for rural (out-state) congregations - i.e. strategies for growth. Having a Total Ministry Team is simply not enough. Many member feel forgotten and ignored by the Diocese.

Would be good to have more contact/direction/assistance from the MN Diocese.

Many of our rural churches are unable financially to support a full time Priest. This is a shame. The 'supply Priest' is an excellent form, the spiritual leader is necessary.

I fully acknowledge and endorse the current and future missions. There is much turmoil within The Episcopal Church (Anglican) world wide and hopefully the Diocese of MN under Bishop Jelinek's good direction can be the leader in reducing this problem. I believe it is solvable within this diocese. PS: also, our little mission here in rural Northwest would like to see more involvement and visitations by the Bishop or his designee than once every few years, if at all possible. Sandy H. has been very dedicated to us and it is very much appreciated.

The poor Episcopal Church is failing in its ministry in southern Minnesota. There are certainly many reasons for this, and for these I am deeply sorry as I have made a personal commitment to this church I attend which at this point does not meet the needs of members.

Communicate with local parishes. Aid them to fulfill their mission and the mission of the diocese.

Might we give churches that cannot support full-time clergy, mission status - thru support from more wealthy congregations. This could increase vitality and growth and perhaps extend mission, rather than closing doors.

I think if the diocese does not help the struggling churches with their finances we will die.

Category 9: Affirm tolerant/liberal theology, even if unpopular

Responses to Greatest Challenge Facing the Episcopal Church in MN

To maintain our identity as a communal or relational church (as opposed to creedal) and help people understand that we have a vital role to play for both individuals and society in reconciling and supporting diverse religious viewpoints.

Too many conservative and do-nothing members.

Spreading the wings of our diocese to include ALL people, regardless of race, background or economic status.

There is too much disagreement between the various diocese of ECUSA regarding the inclusion of members of the GLBT community. This clouds the other issues that need to be addressed. The church as a whole needs to make a firm decision one way or the other as to the inclusion of these persons. Jesus Christ never made any distinction as to who was worthy of salvation. Who are we to now make this judgment or distinction? I vote for total inclusion of all persons without prejudice as is indicated by the Lord! Even if this policy is in direct conflict with the policy of the State, Federal, or local government we have a moral obligation to support everyone. Inclusion of all persons is the will of the Christ and can not be superseded by any other!

I believe that the greatest challenge is to continue to be inclusive of all persons and to be more forthcoming in sharing the richness of our faith.

Being inclusive without losing our identity.

Clearly and aggressively articulating, and demonstrating, that not all Christians are fundamentalist and that the Episcopal Church is an extraordinarily welcoming place for anyone who has spiritual questions or who is seeking a place to explore how to live into a strong faith in the contemporary world.

Providing a radically exclusive, open welcoming faith community for our most invisible and disenfranchised members in the communities in which we live and work!

Helping every Episcopalian to understand the beauty of, and the need for, inclusiveness.

Our theology of inclusion and reconciliation is not appealing to a larger population seeking iron clad certainties and identities. Our mission from Christ is not to be the most popular or numerous group of believers but leaven in the loaf. The consecration of Bp Robison and a woman as Primate creates the scandal that Paul wrote about. We have put some divisive issues on the table and they can't be ignored by the rest of the Episcopal Church nor the Lutherans, Roman Catholics or Protestants. That is part of our role in reconciliation of the world to Christ. Our greatest challenge is facing up to those who urge withdrawal from controversial issues of justice, inclusion, love and justice.

To change the way the outside world looks at us. There are many who strongly oppose our beliefs in ordination of Women and gay/lesbians. We have this opposition with our Episcopal Diocese and so the problem is actually more than just outside of the Episcopal church. Somehow, we have to get the message across that we are here to do God's work in the world using Jesus life and teachings as an example. Jesus never shunned anyone. He was never above being with and working with those who the rest of the world despised. There has to be a way to bring our church back together and to start focusing on what we are really here for rather than what is happening politically within the church. We are here to serve other people, no matter who they are or what they believe. We need to serve all people regardless of their denomination or lack there of or what they believe. I pray that the Diocese of MN can be an example to all the world of what the Episcopal church should really be all about and that is loving our neighbor as ourselves.

Increasing membership and changing traditions that exclude or place less value on the work of women as priests and leaders in the church and also to get over our prejudice toward gay and lesbian people. How can we expect to attract or keep members who are gay and/or a friend or relative of a gay person if we are waffling on whether or not we think that gay people deserve the same treatment, respect, and welcome that others have. What would Jesus do?

Perhaps the National Church is too afraid of public opinion in that individual Dioceses are not allowed to voice a liberal stance on controversial issues. Yes, we must 'dialogue in love until the Second Coming if necessary' as Jesus instructed us to do, but if we cannot speak out for our lesbian daughters and gay sons, how will other Dioceses know where we stand?

Being a progressively positive uniting force of reason and faith to LEAD not follow

To continue to attempt to be a leader in the religious community that embraces all people of faith regardless of condemnation by certain groups. To remember that it is God's job to judge and the churches to minister to all segments of society.

Being clear in our message by holding true to the love of Christ for all, and welcoming all to his table.

Continuing to accept the importance of the struggle rather than thinking it is the outcome that matters most.

Getting out the message that we are inclusive & allow diversity of opinion as to Christ's message and we are not to be confused with the 'religious right' who would have a single answer for all questions

The single greatest challenge will continue to be candidly living out an affirming catholic faith in an environment hostile to it. By affirming catholic I mean a theological and practical commitment to inclusion of all lived within the relationship with the inherited Christian tradition.

Maintain its stance of openness while attracting new members.

Being bold to proclaim our basic stands in controversial matters that make a distinction between fundamentalist sects and world views!

In my humble opinion God has revealed Himself to many people of different cultures, with a name familiar to that culture. If the Diocese cannot reconcile itself to recognizing the validity of God as revealed to other people under a different name we will still only be an elitist ministry proclaiming ourselves the only 'true' believers. Somehow we must be able to see God everywhere good through spirituality is proclaimed...the oft cited passage that 'only thru Jesus' can we come to salvation is detrimental. God must be disappointed in our egalitarian posturing.

The Episcopal church is pushing the envelope with respect to gay rights and same-sex marriage. I agree with this stance, but there are many in society that do not. This will continue to be a dividing threat in the coming years. It needs to be carefully managed. We should expect to lose some congregations and be prepared for that.

Staying the message of peace, poverty & environment

Re-envisioning the message of Jesus, away from the meaningless message of 'Jesus died for our sins and its atonement promises' to seeing Jesus' message as one of being an example of how redemption/salvation comes from leading a life of sacrifice, serving the needs of others and promoting justice and equality

Some can't accept inclusiveness Must accept 'All God's Children'

To become a stronger social influence likely resulting in reduced theological reliance

Not to lose hope & pull into our shells while the winds of conservatism are whipping at us. We need to keep on doing what we do & how we do it. The trend may be a long time in moderating so let's find good allies, as did Mayo Clinic & U of MN, partnering to weather medical changes. How about UCC partnering? (wish we could spoof by using the great 'advertisements' of 15 or 20 yrs. ago.) That were controversial then. No, guess not.

Category 9: Affirm tolerant/liberal theology, even if unpopular

Open-Ended Comments about the Current and Future Mission of the Episcopal Church in MN

The Diocese has to stop constantly examining itself and start getting out and about with the good news we proclaim. We also have to understand that we aren't going to attract the masses. We are good with folks with lots of questions, but now people seem to want only answers. I praise God every day that I am an Episcopalian, and love BCP worship, but I must admit that many friends think my faith stance a bit odd. I know too many people who hold a much more rigid understanding of God's priorities.

What we offer to our congregations and to seekers is unique and, in my mind, a full, living example of what Christ preached. That we worship commonly in community, inviting everyone regardless of belief or doubt. We are not without conflict or challenges, but we serve by showing by example how to work with conflict and disagreement when we remember our common connection in Christ.

I feel that one of the first questions asked that included the term 'unbelievers' is judgmental. Who are we to label any other person in that manner if their beliefs merely differ from our own? I think that there needs to be more sponsorship and awareness of the churches in northern Minnesota where clergy is stretched fairly thin. I feel that the mission of the Diocese should be totally inclusive and welcoming of all persons as indicated by St. Benedict and be more Benedictine in the concepts stated within the Rule towards others.

As a lesbian in a committed life relationship, inclusivity in paramount. Jesus ministered to all persons regardless of status or wider acceptance. The Episcopal Church's openness and support of gays/lesbians is crucial to my involvement. Secondly, though it is really as important, members need to be continually fed spiritually through ministries of healing, visitation, retreats, etc. Social justice can never be preached at the expense of nurturing a member so that one can be socially active.

I believe the gay movement needs to be strengthened to stabilize the Episcopal Church. I am a supporter of the gay movement.

I am hopeful about the future of the Diocese, there is so much happening now, we are somewhat beyond the planting of seeds and entering the new growth stage, mission has been exciting, see Gethsemane Church, new members and new life and new blood is coming into positions of leadership throughout our churches and Diocese. The future is bright, and our Bishop is encouraging us to prepare with joy for our future. Currently I feel great about where we are at, many people are crying out for a unified vision or theological grounding and that is discouraging, as we have much of our theological framework laid out for us in how we pray from our BCP, the 79 BCP offered us a vision of Baptism as the central and core piece of who we are as Episcopalians, and I believe it is better for us to surround pieces of core theology with gray, rather than stumble into the camps of conservative Roman Catholic like dogma that

states clearly who we like and who we do not like. Can we stand firm in our baptismal covenant, the trinity and the Good News of God in Christ, united and excited about who we are and what we have to offer? I hope so, and I believe we can.

All organized forms of Christianity are losing numbers. I myself question not only the authenticity, but also some of the messages in the Bible. That does not mean I am not a deeply spiritual person. I believe that spirituality has been corrupted by politics in a long history of abuse by people in a position of power. So do many of my friends. Having said all that the Episcopal Church in my opinion offers the best balance between ritual paired with history, and the opportunity to more openly explore the teachings of the bible. I chose the Episcopal Church two years ago, because of the inclusion of women as clergy and the inclusion of gay worshippers. I could not feel comfortable in a place of worship that does not welcome everybody. Love and acceptance need to be stressed now more than ever. One of the problems facing the Episcopal church is how to let people know that beneath the ritual and formality are acceptance and tolerance. Most of my friends who are atheist, agnostic, and anti-organized religion, did not know that the Episcopal church allowed female clergy and welcomed gay worshippers. Most people equate ritual and formality with conservatism. I like that my church appears formal but does not act formal. I love the appearances of antiquity without the antiquated thinking. Perhaps those differences need to be stressed. I also feel strongly about advocacy, especially helping those in need and working for peace in all the world. As long as the message includes tolerance for all people and all beliefs. I and many people have a hard time with organized religion in advocacy because of a long history of self interest, where help will be given in exchange for conversion. I have such a hard time pushing my personal beliefs on anyone else. That doesn't mean I can't converse about it. At any rate I applaud advocacy as long as it doesn't come with a price tag. I also think all forms of Christianity need to look back to the beginnings, before Rome got a hold of things. Dare I say to look at the Gnostic Gospels again? Maybe the Church needs to reevaluate why those Gospels were rejected. I have to say that the reason the DaVinci Code did so well (despite the inaccuracies) was that people were ready for such radical ideas. The church needs to be radical at a time like this. Definitely more open and willing to explore. I myself was often troubled by certain aspects of Christianity until I discovered the Gospel of Thomas, until I learned that translations and definitions are not as restrictive as I was lead to believe. One of the Priests at my church does an excellent job of explaining this (Without getting into Gnosticism of course), and that is quite refreshing. Our other Priest does an excellent job of talking about the mysteries, but I had no frame of reference until I read 'The Laughing Jesus' by Timothy Freke and Peter Gandy. Now I can hear things at church with a different lens on. Certain things make more sense to me now. Perhaps the Episcopal Church needs to take the next step.

I think we need to become more widely inclusive, both of all social classes, races, and sexual orientations, and of diverse theological viewpoints. I believe that the Episcopal Church is called to hold together the best of traditional liturgy with the best of progressive theology. We need to be a church of seekers, who are seeking to deepen our understanding of the gospel, while living that gospel in the wider world.

I am very glad that the Diocese is a leader in inclusiveness--not just accepting, but welcoming. I am also happy to see that it is being self-evaluative. I would like to see more active communication between the Diocese and the individual congregations. Perhaps that could be in the form of a person from the Diocese coming once a year to talk about the work being done by the Diocese and our partnership in that work.

I would like to see the Diocese of Minnesota make inclusion and ministry it's top priority. I believe there are people looking for a faith home, and are unaware of what we stand for. I also believe there are congregations that have ceased to remember that 'All are Welcome Here'.

The Episcopal Church in Minnesota has an important mission with respect to reconciliation and inclusion. We must not worry about how big we will become but how effective we can be. We will fail if we simply measure our success by Sunday head-counts and pledge units. Our measures of success must be broader than that - % of parishioners engaged in ministries, the numbers of people included in society (not necessary converted or baptized in the ECUSA). We must look at the impact of our ministry on those who are not or may never become members. Membership is not a true measure of success in ministry, healing society is the measure.

Continue to be progressive.

I hope that it is a success. I enjoy things like small centering prayer groups, women's groups, EFM. I am not sure if I belong in the Church or not at times due to my uncertainty about my beliefs and wishing for a church that does not include sexist, homophobic, hierarchical/classist liturgy and beliefs at the highest levels of the Church administration. I am also proud of the Church for all that they have done to change and be welcoming so far.

We are 'the middle way' for many seekers and needy. Our traditions are hollow if they are used to shut others out.

Given the national (even international) trends of people flocking to fundamentalist churches in the search for certainty, maybe we need to focus more on building our core rather than looking for increase in membership. The

times will change and we will be ready to welcome those who are beginning to leave the fundamentalist churches and the flood that may follow. That and find some solid ways to reach the unchurched!

Let me preface this with the fact that I am not a gay or lesbian person; however I do have friends from this community. These people are wonderful and devout human beings. It is very important to me that the church not backslide on this issue (this has already started)In order to be vital to God's mission we must support all people. We must embrace more minorities and try to bring them in to our fold. We also need to continue to strengthen our youth ministries so that the church will continue to be a vital part of all generations.

Continue to support the message of acceptance for all who seek God. Work strongly with those congregations who are not afraid to reach outside of their comfort zone.

I am frightened by the seeming need to find black and white answers by some members. I believe this is the underlying cause of a need to 'place the blame' on a specific entity, group or person. I am a believer of the need to live in the solution, not live in the problem. The Episcopal Church has been always (to me) an affirmation of humanity, of the need to struggle, but not of the need to stand and point the finger at another. I fear those who want to become such a force.

From my corner of the diocese, I see a lot of hopeful signs. We seem to be on-mission and growing. I hope that everyone in the diocese feels the same way and sees similar evidence of growth and the work of the Spirit in our midst. I am glad we're not a uniform diocese; I pray that we remain a united diocese. I am concerned about the presence of an ACN (Anglican Communion Network) parish in St. Paul

We are a bridge for some fallen away Christians from traditional churches. There is a trickling away from mega-churches of believers who want a smaller, reasoned community. There is a need to keep a balanced view of separation of church and state --- politics tends to be galvanizing of increased separation between people and encourages rigid dictation of beliefs by individuals who believe their opinion is absolute truth.

The Episcopal Church is known for being progressive. I have never heard a sermon dealing with GLBT people. Why is that? Are clergy afraid of some thing? Ignorant about this subject. This issue sets us apart from other Christian denominations - why are we not exploiting our advantage? Shouldn't we exploit our advantage?

Tolerance & Love

Having served on the standing committee, being a life-long member of this Diocese, and being a member of a Total Ministry Congregation, I think we're missing opportunities if we don't embrace, even closer than we do now, The Lutherans, Methodists and other so-called 'liberal' branches of Christ's tree.

Not really qualified - but we have many honestly concerned clergy and laity that believe in Equality for All. Many non Episcopal persons attend our open instruction and discussion because so many denominations do not promote individual thinking and discernment

I heard from reports from the Diocesan Convention of great excitement about the Diocese of MN working to achieve the UN Goals (Aids prevention, promoting general equality etc.)These are perfectly laudable ends. Our problem, as Episcopalians and as Christians, is not one of having the right or wrong ends - rather, our problem is one of means. We will never excite people to ministry through a theology that tells people they are so messed up that God had to send his Son to atone for the sins of the world. Really! What gibberish! Who believes this? Who finds this mythology/theology compelling? As Episcopalians we are told we can 'think' whatever we want, to redefine our theology. Yet we can't dare utter publicly what our minds think privately - that our foundational theology as expressed in the BCP and our liturgy expresses an out-moded and primitive theology. We have the freedom to not mean what we say, but we have a freedom to say what we mean. We need a dramatic re-thinking and restructuring of our theological foundations. Our focus should be on our means -- we need to express a theology of salvation based on following the ethical model of Jesus.

I am very involved in my congregation but not very familiar with the Diocese as a whole. I am in my twenties and chose the Episcopal Church because of its unique mix of traditional worship combined with safe space for the intellectually curious progressive. I think it is imperative that the church continue its efforts in serving the poor and being an inclusive community.

We are a welcoming church to all people. The door is open!

Thanks for asking my opinion. First and foremost, I point to the need to embrace anti-racism work in this diocese. There is so much white privilege in this diocese that it is blatantly invisible to tradition-loving (i.e., 'our' white European traditions) White Episcopalians. Even language on surveys like this are definitely written from the perspective of

white Christian theological thought as illustrated by the use of terms such as 'non-believer,' 'Savior,' 'Lord,' and 'rule'. Committee structures, formats, and processes do not entice people of color because they are ultimately entrenched in white privilege. Change is needed but the burden of instigating and/or carrying out those changes are loaded onto those individuals who are adept at bicultural life and any failures are blamed on oppressed groups, e.g. 'they aren't interested in serving on our committee,' 'they are just not interested in the work of the Church,' 'they always have to bring up other issues (like racism) that are not pertinent to the conversation.' Ultimately change need to begin with those already in power by committing themselves to anti-racism and thereby changing structures and power bases.

I believe I have express my feeling along the way. I can imagine a world that will be peaceful, tolerant and accept those that vary in their beliefs form ours. Let us work together for a kinder society. Imposing beliefs on the minds of others is negative - but expressing by our actions and words can improve our own existence and in this way will improve society as whole. Again I say teach us to discern the talents that we possess and put us to work!

Except in the matter of gay liberation, we are far too removed from issues of justice, economic & social. We sign on the public proclamations at the diocesan level but our congregational follow up is non-existent. We are too timid - are afraid of alienating pledgers. We must become bold, radically attached to the social gospel and ecumenical. When we listen to preaching about the world we live in and need to address with the same fervor we listen to a well performed liturgy, we will come closer to discipleship. We need to stop being so complacently self righteous about our 'openness' to gays when we ignore the truly left out - the poor and hopeless!!

The Episcopal Diocese needs to continue to be proactive in proclaiming the love of Christ as universal and not the sole purvey of 'The Christian Right.' We should be starting that supporting and putting political muscle and money into an array of liberal causes ARE Christian values and non something else. 'Values,' particularly in political circles has somehow been given to conservatives and liberal thinking has somehow, as a consequence, become something else, at least in popular media and such. We need to be clear that doing Christ's work with the marginalized (politically) - poor, non-English speaking, gay & lesbian, disabled - ARE real and not a response to some conservative voice from yon.

Category 10: Deal with internal conflict, mistrust, fear, and division

Responses to Greatest Challenge Facing the Episcopal Church in MN

Fear...of change, others, being too political, being too bold or too radical, of losing tradition, of risking our lives for the sake of the gospel, of actually carrying our cross.

Fighting amongst ourselves--polarization, refusal to really listen to each other and unwillingness to live with disagreement

Overcoming complacency and the status quo.

Coming together

Overcoming division and learning to embrace each other, even when we disagree with each other.

Overcoming its internal divisions and its external image as elitist and exclusive.

To continue forward in mutual ministry amongst disagreements.

Lack of the local congregations interest in the church on the diocesan level.

Developing a stronger relationship between the local churches and the Diocese.

Recovering collective purpose from the teeth of disillusion

Being able to communicate well between the metro churches and those in out-state MN. There's too much of an 'us-vs.-them' mentality.

To move beyond the divisiveness within the National Church.

How to bring all categories of people under one umbrella and do our best to encourage the entire Family to stay and work together.

I think the greatest challenge is to maintain our focus on the work God call us to do and not be distracted by the actions of congregations who threaten to divide the church. (joining the ACN, for example, and agitating for a split with the Episcopal Church).

I believe we are in a state of confusion because we are in deconstruction / reconstruction. The disequilibrium we feel is an opening to bring new life. A thorough focus on the mission of the church will lead us what structures are essential We are simply facing questions that have been faced by former generations - the balance between caring for individual (congregational) needs and being 'prophetic' in the world.

The fractiousness between the clergy and the bishop. Pull together for heaven's sake (literally!) and stop sniping at the diocese.

Trying to conform to both conservatives and liberals within the church.

Most congregations do not trust the diocesan initiatives since so many have failed in the last 10 years

The congregationalism of its parishes and the way in which criticism is the default position of so many, lay and clergy.

Spitefulness

Learning to work together for the good of the whole.

Looking at the Diocese in Minnesota instead of the communities it must serve. Apparent inability to stick with a plan/idea for longer than one year.

Stop dwelling on the past, dare to imagine with boldness, be willing to risk and stay the course

Addressing effectively the current issue of sexuality

Building trust. There appears to be mistrust throughout the system. Between Greater Minnesota and the Metro, between clergy and episcopate, between diocesan staff and congregations, between congregations and diocese.

Recovering our Anglican penchant for disagreeing agreeably, forging reconciliation within the Church, and reaffirming our focus on our mission of reconciliation in the world.

Overcoming the selfishness and self-centeredness of a large number in the diocese.

Trust. Clarity of mission. Any sense of working together as a diocese.

A lack of trust and evangelism.

To create an atmosphere of trust across a geographically broad diocese and establish ways of celebrating and sharing spiritual growth with a feeling there is enough to do the work God has called us to do together.

How we handle human sexuality: Some have traditional norms apart from scriptural teachings on same sex relationships, while others consider the need to be inclusive. How do we address both groups without creating division in the Episcopal church as a whole.

The politics of exclusion. Excluding groups or individuals either directly stating so or by ignoring them in our pews or in parish events.

Bring both liberal and conservative members of the congregation into balance

Inclusivity and unity.

A UNIFIED IDENTITY. As a newer Episcopal, what I see and know in my parish fit's me. The broader differences between churches within the Diocese is confusing to explain to outsiders.

Overcome the rampant congregationalism that breeds mistrust of the Diocesan Center.

Balancing the needs of individual congregations (what they need to grow and prosper) and the broader needs of the Diocese.

Learning and being willing to work together for the common good.

To clarify our sense of identity and mission and work together as partners in mission.

Clarity of vision, sense of common purpose

Truthfulness in our relationships and the inability to trust one another. When we get together in groups we hold one another at such a distance that all we discuss is theory. We never get to the point where we can roll up our sleeves and do the hard work of building, sustaining and encouraging each other to stop all the individualism.

The inability to truly listen to its congregations and engage in dialogue.

Getting the rift between the diocese and congregations, and working together as laity, clergy, and diocesan staff.

Implementation of a plan with accountability and adaptation to changing context. Backbiting!

Infighting between different constituencies: urban congregations v. suburban congregations, metro v. greater MN, Native American v. European American.

Finding the way to give expression to a diversity of views on the hot-button issues while still maintaining a strong embracing unity which will allow the gospel mission (in all its fullness) to address society.

Moving together

Fear of change

United cooperation and involvement with ourselves and other denominations and people

Bringing both liberal thinkers and conservative thinkers into balance so that both opinions are respected and dignified

Apathy at both ends

Current risk of schism

That individual congregations (and perhaps clergy as well) are so concerned with their immediate parochial needs/survival as to not care/not see the need for the Diocese as a structure.

Adhering to Christ's teachings while trying to be as inclusive as possible and accept all our members as part of the larger Episcopal community

Category 10: Deal with internal conflict, mistrust, fear, and division

Open-Ended Comments about the Current and Future Mission of the Episcopal Church in MN

We have to get to know each other throughout the State in order to communicate and build trust. Be honest and open with who we are as individuals and more support from the pulpit on teaching who are brothers and sisters are in the Episcopal Church of Minnesota. We need to attract younger generations incorporating things of importance to them such as world issues, science and religion, strong sense of community, and knowing what is going on in other episcopal churches.

Enough internal analysis. Internal healing will follow when we start regaining lost ground. Get successful lay and clergy leaders together and figure out how to attract and keep more of the same. Focus on expanding on our successes rather than examining our past problems. Avoid getting into a deep theological discussion of what 'success' means. Places that are succeeding know what it means. Places that aren't get into discussion.

It has often been my experience that a certain perfectionism holds us back, a lack of willingness to experiment, fear of being the fools for Christ we are called to be.

The Episcopal Church is where God speaks to me and many in my congregation. It is a vehicle for God. I don't see the Diocese in this vehicle though I know our congregation would somehow be different without it. I yearn for a more positive attitude as well as information about who and what the Diocese is.

I would like to see us take an upbeat view about our current and future state. The language in this survey was depressing at best. Clearly whoever wrote it does not feel good about where we are and where we are going! One of Dale Carnegie's tenants is 'act enthusiastic and you'll be enthusiastic.' It's true! I'm not suggesting that we pump sunshine and ignore the realities of our current status, but attitude is everything!! People cue off the attitude of the leadership. When the Diocese publishes a survey with this wording, what am I to think??

I pray that we all continue to listen and learn as the Holy Spirit directs our path. I thank Bishop Jelinek for laying out a clear process and reasonable timetable for succession. You've created an environment in which we can set aside politics and past disputes, and discern what God has in store for us.

The general mission of the Church is expressed in the BCP's Outline of Faith: 'The mission of the Church is to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ' (855). That mission is hindered by a lack of consensus--locally, nationally, and internationally-- about what constitutes orthodox Christian belief and practice. Until and unless consensus can be reached, it is not likely that specific efforts 'to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ' will be effective.

We have to face the enemy (us) and overcome our fears of success.

I was very encouraged by the recent clergy conference. It was very exciting to imagine we might begin an era of truth telling and accountability, leaving behind the destructiveness of an overly pastoral culture.

I'm eager to see if we have the will, courage and vision to make the changes we need to make.

I would really like to see us embrace the Millennium Development Goals as a focal point, something we can all agree on and something that is a sign of true hope in the world. I'd like to see the BCMMS (or BCM or whatever you are now) move carefully and fluidly and not get caught up in thinking so hard about this that we don't feel anything, including the Holy Spirit and/or intuition. I'd love to see the churches in the 'outer' parts of the state tell the churches in the twin cities to stop belly-aching and get on with it. I'd like to see us get our poop in a group so we can attract another awesome bishop and so we can move forward with some levity - we don't laugh enough - we're so darn serious. It gets boring boring boring. Thanks for your hard work. I'd like us to do a major piece of work to figure out what would attract people to our churches that includes one on one interviews of people who aren't coming to church (and aren't going to church anywhere else).

The opening questions in this survey reflect a bias toward outreach/mission as social service/justice ministry instead of evangelism and reflect a reliance on institutions or organizations to do the work for individuals and congregations. Not a very helpful set of questions. But perhaps I should just accept the idea that that perception is too deep in the diocese to uproot.

Build and finish old programs that work rather than cover them up with new ones. Same thing, different name.

The energy and commitment that we are now putting into the mission of the Episcopal Church in Minnesota will surely strengthen our presence in this state. This grassroots renewal that is inclusive of every voice in this diocese will go far in healing and strengthening our relationships. I am hopeful that in turn, this will light a fire within many people's hearts to grow and care for their church.

I am concerned that we will spend so much time in process about feeling united some we can do mission that we will fail to do justice to the end result of finding a consensus on Mission Strategy-- I think this study and process is yet another example of avoiding the real issue and just delays the challenge to agreeing on a mission strategy. In the meantime I find hope in implementing total ministry strategy now and helping a troubled world now.

I am encouraged by this process, and the fact that we are facing our dysfunction and failures of the past. I believe we have to let go of more baggage (liturgical, hierarchical) and be bolder about speaking our Good News of God's grace and love for all people. Thank you for all your hard work in creating and collating this survey, and all you are doing as part of the BCMS.

The ECA as represented by the Diocese of MN used to represent the best that the ECA could accomplish. We were leaders. Our work with Indian ministries was/is outstanding. Our work with Total Ministry was/is outstanding. Our work with our laity was outstanding. We were focused upon the laity and supporting them as they lived Jesus' teaching. We lived Jesus' teachings. We provided a home for questioners...it was appropriate to ask questions! That is why I originally joined the Episcopal Church 35 years ago. Times have changed. Now metro clergy dismiss out-state clergy and their work; metro clergy dismiss the Bishop and his work. They seem instead to be focused primarily upon their individual churches' growth and wealth. Their truth appears to be the only truth. And, they seem focused primarily upon themselves. I don't remember Jesus teaching this. Bishop Jelinek has announced his succession plan. He is probably the most outstanding leader this diocese has encountered in many years, but that

fact will not be recognized locally for many years. It has been regularly recognized at a National/Regional level. I do performance evaluations for Bishop Jelinek and have conducted them at National/Regional/Diocesan and Local levels. Bishop Jelinek has made mistakes. However, he learned from them. He has not been forgiven for his mistakes by the clergy. Apparently clergy never make mistakes. The reason I left my local church was because the Bishop was regularly vilified by my local rector. I cannot accept such a man as a representative of Christ. I moved on. I would like to return to the Episcopal Church. It used to stand for so much...and still could. I have high hopes for Presiding Bishop Schori. I also have hope that the ECA will recognize the fact that the Anglican Communion (comprised primarily of 3rd world countries at this point in time) does not represent the ECA. We in the ECA can be role models or abdicate that role. I am hoping it will be the former. It means moving out on the strength of our convictions, however...something we used to be comfortable doing and do not seem to be now. Did I mention that I tend to be a cock-eyed optimist??? It is either a gift or a curse from God...I'm not sure which. Thank you for your work.

When I have individual conversations with members of the Episcopal Church whether lay or ordained, I am filled with hope because I see Christ at work in individuals and I have no trouble believing that God's work is and will continue to be done. However, I was concerned by what I feel is a very telling story. At the clergy conference, it took time to identify the ties of trust and truthfulness that bind us together. I noted the level of sharing decreased significantly as the group numbers rose from 2 to 8. By the time we had 8 people together, theory was the discussion. My other concern was the dwindling numbers of people as the conference progressed. That says to me that although I may be willing to identify the problems, I do not have or will not allocate the time to be part of the solution.

The Diocese and congregations should meet at local and central levels to mutually find solutions for poor growing congregations in terms of financial sufferings, space, and equipping church members for future ministries.

Am pleased that we are trying to do something with a seemingly good process Am jaded that there will not be adequate follow through to make a difference

Currently, we are moving in a positive direction. We reach out to ALL, We listen to ALL, WE WANT TO learn of new cultures, races, traditions. If we keep in that direction we will all go TOGETHER.

The Bishop's meditation on 10/28 am was right on. We live too much in fear (I wish I knew why) to do the great things that are possible with us. I continue to hope and pray for this, my church

The direction of the Diocese will at times lead people in conflict of Christian value that the leadership sometimes will not recognize and this weakens the church. Money and racism go hand in hand and the Diocese must thoroughly look at what direction it is heading and empathy is our greatest tool and some times the only bridge to others.

Thanks for asking!!! I believe we will truly have a mission and be a Diocese when: 1. When various churches join together and share our gifts - respecting and learning from each other. 2. When we begin to reach out to others who are 'poor', needy, or disenfranchised. 3. When anyone looking at us can say we are a people who truly love and support one another instead of judge. 4. We agree to stop the suffering in our world instead of wasting time deciding who cannot participate in the sacraments (Eucharist, marriage, ordination, consecration etc) Just try to keep people away from a church like that!! This is a prayer that I think speaks to the mission of the church, the author is unknown to me. Send us, O God, as your messengers to hearts without a home - to lives without love - to the crowds without a guide. Send us to the children whom none have fed, to the sick whom none have visited, to the bereaved whom none have comforted, to the fallen whom non have lifted up. Kindle your flame on the altars of our hearts that others may be warmed thereby. Cause your light to shine in our souls that other may see the way. Keep our sympathies and insights ready - our wills keen - our hands quick to help our brothers and sisters in their need of Jesus Christ. Amen.

This is far too long of a survey The whole matter of mutual partnership between parish and diocese must be stronger and less adversarial

The Diocese doesn't seem very important to me.

This is a Diocese of diverse and cultural people. Our congregations are ageing and in 'outstate' we are not meeting or, able to meet, and attract even our own youth. We are centering or, trying to, attract too many different groups. We're fragmented.

Our church has taken same paths that are not popular. It makes me sad to see people leave because of issues. It is also hard to take steps in new directions sometimes. I think we are overcome by our fears, and want to escape. I know if Jesus were here we would all sit together to listen. You know the Lutherans, Baptist, Catholics, Methodist, us and all the others. We are taught to love our neighbor and our God. In my neighborhood we don't seem to

concerned about how or why/why not we worship and share God. It is our freedom to do so, but are we really trying to love our neighbor? Or maybe it is too much of a hassle. I know working two jobs I get pretty busy.

Category 11: Issues with finances and tithing

Responses to Greatest Challenge Facing the Episcopal Church in MN

Trying to maintain too many congregations that are struggling financially.

Money

Our failure to operate out of our condensed financial model (ACG) which has led to the unfinanced priority areas and reduced Diocesan staff that is then overworked and stretched too thin to adequately oversee/manage/serve a Diocese that has the huge physical area of the Dioc. of MN.

lack of money to be used for programming

Money

Financial support to growing church

Getting everybody to tithe. If we were sufficiently serious to do that, we would be just fine.

Financial vitality in local congregations

The need to 'pay forward' funding for potential programs that will be appealing to newcomers (seekers or otherwise) that we currently say we can't fund. Comment on question 10 letter i - gave this an 11 (critical) and on questions 16A - included the language 'but that national mission is shaped by local reps who articulate needs'

CASH

Competing for new members and resources

Category 11: Issues with finances and tithing

Open-Ended Comments about the Current and Future Mission of the Episcopal Church in MN

While we as a faith community have a rich artistic liturgical history, having a pleasant worship service will not feed the hungry. The practice of tithing is not only a transforming spiritual exercise, but is the discipline that will give the Diocese the resources to accomplish our mission.

Some things are being done well by individual congregations and groups outside the programs of the diocese. TEC for the youth is strong in the north, but no other funding for youth programming is in the works right now. The Environmental Stewardship Commission is doing what we should all be doing, but funding has been eliminated. There are some things individual congregations can do for themselves if they have talented people in leadership roles, but it does take some funding for groups of wider scope to continue.

1) Insist on great reverence and seriousness in worship. Commit ourselves to Catholic liturgy with all the accoutrements of music, mystery, and dramaturgy that make our heritage so rich. (plenty of incense and sung services) 2) Commit ourselves to outspoken advocacy of social justice and peace from the pulpit and in our public worship 3) Cultivate a sense of the holy in our churches, and teach people to pray in them. Offer instruction in contemplative prayer 4) strongly encourage every worshiper to tithe, and require every vestry member to do so. (The Mormons do, and look what it does for them!)

Category 12: Other

Responses to Greatest Challenge Facing the Episcopal Church in MN

It seems we need a bold, inclusive, life-giving vision to encourage full participation of time, talent and treasure.

Our direction toward the downtrodden and ignoring the growing affluent middle class. Without both we will not have a viable Diocese.

We are too interested in 'relevance' and not interested at all in authenticity.

A parochial vision of the Church at the parish level limits the ability of the Diocese to have a significant impact upon the larger Episcopal community of the state and of the national Church.

Focus and discipline

Competing with fundamentalist, evangelical churches.

Diversity-----racial, cultural, financial, geographical, theological

A 'perfect storm': (1) We are addicted to a form of worship and an aesthetic style that requires an ecclesiastical fabric (buildings, music & worship program) that our small congregations cannot afford; (2) Our small congregations include some people so committed to maintaining just that (economically untenable) form of worship that they sometimes resist change, and even vilify those (in diocesan offices, e.g.) who suggest change; (3) We do not have an articulate alternative understanding of mission: to the contrary many clergy and laity understand 'mission' as 'inviting people to share our neurosis' (see ##1 and 2).

A selfish, internal looking, maintenance approach to doing and being church that places the individual needs before the congregation and then before the diocese, and then before the national church and then before the world. We need to reverse the priority and do church for the sake of the savior of the world.

Evangelism

We haven't a clue how to do mission based ministry. We are in maintenance/survival mode and we don't even know it.

Society's lack of understanding that in order to be healthy an individual has to have a spiritual foundation.

Vibrancy of congregations.

Raising the level of commitment of its members; in work for the Gospel, in raising resources for the mission and in planning for long term transformation.

To develop a vital sense of Mission and Outreach

Apathy and prejudice of members, saying they invite all but in reality only wanting to stay the way it always was.

Learning to think outside the institutional box in mission, theology, and worship.

Do people crave formality or informality in worship?

Standing up for its own ethics and beliefs. To live out what our beliefs are. Being the true reflection of Heaven on Earth

Loving each other. Native Americans are joyful Episcopalians - no one listens to them. Ideas about transformation originate among the poor. Listening

Survival through re-energizing ourselves locally

Knowing that there is a change in paradigm happening. Being able to stick with any plan to see it through

Scripture, outreach and liturgy all need to have a solid foundation of understanding and support. The local, regional and national church need to maintain this balance.

survival and understanding

Too cerebral? Or is it just me?

Have no idea.

Lutheran and Evangelical Churches dominate here.

Systematic / Institutional Racism

Move to abolish Sunday morning athletic practices. Keep Sundays as a day of rest, a day for families, a day to worship

Compassion

Being able to accept it all as it is

Not to let the Episcopal Church die.

Category 12: Other

Open-Ended Comments about the Current and Future Mission of the Episcopal Church in MN

We need to focus on Latino ministry and building infrastructure in the people of color communities

This will take twice as long as we think it should, but if done right, could be an exciting adventure.

We need to change some of our logic so that we can increase. What was working in the past is not working now.

I was delighted with the whole of the recent Clergy Conference, and the leadership of it particularly. The Bishop was (through the conference as a vehicle) a true catalyst for coming together and moving into the future with the integrity I expect of my bishop, and it was a time of real Grace. His presence was palpable and most welcome.

Welcome others. Remove guilt. Re-enforce others. Lead as best we can.

I appreciate what effort the diocese has put forth recently, and am thankful to have this opportunity to express my opinions. I think that by focusing on hope we will remain strong.

The clergy conference was an uplifting experience which promises hope for the future.

We need to become more welcoming to strangers.

The most important area of focus, from my perspective, is that together as a diocese, both individual congregations and the Diocesan Center must recognize that we are intimately woven together; that it will be only by claiming ourselves as belonging to each other as one Body that we will be able to move forward with successful, intentional ministry and mission in the name of Christ.

... I believe that the fundamental and evangelical churches offer immediate rules and directions for people seeking to get a grasp on religion and faith but that the Episcopal church i.e. the Dio of MN Episcopal Church offer them a way in which to incorporate their personal background, faith, spirit understanding and denomination history into a viable, daily -living acceptance of call and gift discernment and way to hear the gospel in the contemporary world.

I have worked in a N.A. parish and been a member of a suburban parish. The missions of these very different parishes have many things in common, but yet they also have significantly different needs, strengths, and weaknesses.

The Episcopal Church in Minnesota is presently in a state similar to dormancy, with relatively little growth in membership. That's not necessarily bad: peoples' religious needs change with time, and right now there may be less need for the Episcopal Church at present. However, I think that peoples' needs do change with time, and I think that the time of change is near. The Episcopal Church is the home--the harbor--for thinking people to be supported in their faith. We need to be there for them!

Because of the current emphasis on mission strategy planning I have great hope for the future mission of the Diocese of Minnesota and hope to continue to be heavily involved in mission.

I am hopeful that an honest and patient re-examination of the rich history, traditions, and successes and failures of the Diocese will produce renewed energy and commitment among younger generations to carry it forward into the 21st century.

We must do a better job of genuinely welcoming the stranger. I joined a congregation because they seemed to have waited all their lives for me to appear. We also need better preaching and more attention to helping people listen to God. What if church included a time for people to tell others how God had spoken to them or been present in their lives?

The Mission of the Diocese of MN is to bring all people (especially those who find our form of worship fulfilling) to God. There are many forms of worship and each one appeals to a different type of person--so we can not serve all people. Part of our mission is to offer a place where people can think through their beliefs and arrive at a conclusion which satisfies their mind and soul.

The church represents to me the mix of traditional with current. The richness of the church rituals continuing with the extension of acceptance of diversity and understanding of who we are in modern life with our ministry is what this church supports for me and my family. No other religious tradition that I have experienced provides this approach.

I want to be more hopeful.

There is hope

I feel that a lot of work needs to be done to grow and I am seeing a great deal of potential in my own Parish. Only time will tell what will happen with it.

I am hopeful because of the tireless efforts of some very, very good people, like the people on the Mission Strategy Commission. Thank You.

The church should be a place for spiritual teaching and formation, a place to provide hope and support for those are in need, a place for guidance and support for family, and a place to build and nurture relationships with self, others, and neighbors worldwide.

I am thankful for the many Episcopalians in Minnesota who have added to my life and that of my family. My gratitude energizes me for the ministry opportunities presented to me both locally and diocesan wide. I am hopeful that we will be open to the gifts of the spirit to lead us to a future of continuing to build up the life of our church and communities.

I have faith that the Diocese will adapt to the changes yet to unfold.

I deeply appreciate the work of the bishop and the mission strategy commission. With your help and that of the Holy Spirit we may yet find the faith, focus, and fervor we need to rebuild the Episcopal Church in Minnesota.

The reference to the leadership of the diocese in question 21 is unfortunately very vague. There is lots of good leadership around; many people are trying hard to be part of leading the diocese in a variety of ways. But there is no way to generalize about the varying effectiveness of council, trustees, the bishop, the bishop's staff, standing committee, COM, etc. Also in 21: I think our mission history is a rich resource, but I don't think it will be a major factor in our success in mission. I think that advocacy will be a factor in our church's growth, but not based particularly on our historical record of advocacy, which, overall, is a fairly modest record.

Be Bold. Doing nothing is the same as admitting defeat.

As I am unclear on the mission of the diocese, I can't comment.

I do see great hope in our mission beginnings. I think we have lost our perspective on what it means to be a mission church, a church that seeks to actively reach out to others. But it is a part of our heritage. In other words, its in our DNA. I also think we need to lead people into a deeper spiritual experience of God and what it means to be disciples, followers of Christ. Our ambiguity is our strength and our weakness.

I appreciate the efforts being made to ask for input, discernment, candor, without punity.

I think we are at a kairos moment and must find a clear vision and sense of mission that we can all rally around if the Diocese of Minnesota and the Episcopal Church is to have a significant place in the lives of the people of Minnesota.

I am extremely hopeful and will do my part to be a leader and to invite/promote/evoke leadership in other members around me.

Keep the faith. Keep up the good work

I am feeling more positive and energized after hearing the commission's presentation. The group is a hard working one and I feel they do a thorough job and I am grateful for their hard work.

People in this diocese are willing to work together to deal with the problems we are facing. We are not ignoring problems.

Where's the people of color?

God's work & message will survive w/o the Church, but I'd hate to lose the Church. I love our denomination's commitment to dialogue, even when it's disagreeable.

I appreciate the need for change but I feel we may have 'thrown the baby out with the wash.' In the parish we have contemporary wording - I haven't heard Rite II for some time (except at funerals) I know in this survey I sound very pessimistic - frankly, I feel very (unreadable) with the Church and the Diocese. I sincerely hope I am wrong.

We need a truly Anglo-Catholic parish. St. Paul's on the Hill does not want to be it.

The Diocese states that it is for the poor or the needy but it leans more toward the elitist - the senior housing is geared toward a high income retired person. The UEC was encouraged to move forward and not given a time line before support was cut. The feasibility study was positive based upon comments and stated support from the diocese (from impressions and statements) Past experience showed that logically the UEC would need perpetual assistance because of the clients served. The Minnesota Diocese can continue to demonstrate that diversity can be an asset - the bible and Jesus wants us to accept and welcome everyone - be he a sinner, in prison or different lifestyle and this acceptance can be a model for all the other dioceses - 'we are working His purpose out.'

I am more concerned about the mission of the local church. At this point our parish has so many ministries one can't find one to call when all they really want is to talk to the rector. I feel I should just tear this thing up and not respond. As after the first 3 pages I had decided I just want my church to be just like it is (or was). Our parish has done many out-reaching things that members have contributed much effort - but they've been of a solid nature. I don't know what catalyst they've been to join as contributing Episcopalians.

I have tried my best in the course of these questions - don't know if I have succeeded. Build or encourage a simple loving refuge based on the gentle love of Christ - don't try and go flying off trying to be all things to all people.

1) Thank you for asking 2) I need to know more about: mission, what our diocese (leadership) is thinking about all 'this'

We must become active in teaching peace in every aspect of our lives. Our church must preach and teach PEACE.

As a lift long Episcopalian, I regret being a minority

Even though the Native People rarely ever attend church they make demands when they lose a love one. We need singers, prayers, H.E. - after the service they never come back

People go to the 'mega churches' to be entertained, not to hear the word of the Lord. They would rather watch a preacher dance on stage yelling 'Alleluia.' Soon, people will realize they are not getting the word and will start filtering back. Prepare for them!!

In my position as being one of the older clergypersons (serving five bishops) it would be presumptuous to make future 'guesses.' As indicated inside I believe that the Holy Spirit Himself being called upon eagerly will continue to guide (through its Bishop) a diocese which has a great history. In one answer I seem to disparage our bishop. I find him to be compassionate and to me a good pastor.

I think the work of the Diocese is important.