



# The Episcopal Diocese of LOUISIANA

Walking in Love. Making Jesus Known. Transforming Lives.

May 2024

Dear Friends in Christ,

We are writing to share information about an exciting opportunity for the Diocese of Louisiana, its future planning, and what this effort can mean for each parish.

At the end of 2023, the Episcopal Church Foundation selected our diocese to join three others as participants in the Diocesan Vitality Initiative. This strategic work explores the challenging issues facing tomorrow's Episcopal Church. With these diocesan colleagues, we are learning from others' experiences and likewise offering our own in the spirit of collaboration. Our Vitality Initiative learning cohort comprises the dioceses of Louisiana, Ohio, Southwest Florida, and Utah. We aim to identify what is needed most here in our diocese and then create and implement transformational solutions.

Our committee began work in January with an orientation session, after which we identified three areas of focus to help us with long-term sustainability: mission-focused budgeting, property insurance, and communications. We meet regularly in subcommittee focus areas and jointly as the full committee with Bishop Duckworth. We meet with our national cohort bi-monthly and have committed to this schedule through 2025.

This introductory letter is being sent to all parishes in the Diocese of Louisiana, as well as their clergy and lay leadership. We are hopeful about the Vitality Initiative and, at the same time, aware that our diocese will likely encounter emergent challenges over the course of the next few years. We are ready to make pragmatic choices to address those realities. We will always be transparent and update our progress every three to four months until the initiative's conclusion. As Bishop Duckworth visits parishes throughout the year, she will provide updates and welcome your feedback and questions.

Through this critical diocesan project, we are preparing for our collective future, creating new opportunities for financial well-being, and embracing our relationships as faithful and connected Episcopalians throughout Southeast Louisiana. The Diocese of Louisiana is blessed with creativity and opportunity. As Easter people, we pray that our journey in the coming months will bring new life to our shared mission as the Episcopal Diocese of Louisiana, restoring all people to unity with God and each other in Christ.

Yours in Christ,

The DVI Committee

The Rt. Rev. Shannon Duckworth: *12th Bishop of the Diocese of Louisiana*

The Rev. Canon Morgan MacIntire: *Canon to the Ordinary*

The Rev. Christopher Duncan: *Rector of St. James, Baton Rouge*

Keith Crawford: *Member of Trinity, New Orleans; Diocesan Treasurer; CFO at Petermayer Marketing Agency*

Catherine Harrell: *Member of St. James, Baton Rouge; Communications and Marketing Consultant*

Francis Neziyana: *Member of St. Patrick's, Zachary; Small business owner*

Nancy Stich: *Member of Trinity, Baton Rouge; CPA at TWRU CPAs & Financial Advisors*

Attachment: Frequently Asked Questions



## Diocesan Vitality Initiative FAQs

### WHAT IS THE DIOCESAN VITALITY INITIATIVE?

This effort of The Episcopal Church Foundation partners with dioceses to identify significant challenges with long-term impact and then to work on new processes and solutions to effect important change and future sustainability. Participation in the Diocesan Vitality Initiative is intended to be eye-opening and accountable. This facilitated multi-year participation provides dioceses a supportive framework to confidently and responsibly make necessary changes that are renewing and transformational.

### WHAT IS THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH FOUNDATION?

Founded in 1949, the Episcopal Church Foundation is an independent, lay-led, and inclusive organization that helps build, vitalize, and transform Episcopal faith communities, focusing on formation, finance, and resources. The Episcopal Church Foundation's purpose is to be a catalyst, agent, and advocate for transformation, renewal, and growth in the Episcopal Church through practical, innovative, and spiritually grounded ways. Its Mission is to lead Episcopal faith communities into the future as a partner for transforming ministries. [www.ecf.org](http://www.ecf.org)

### HOW WAS THE DIOCESE OF LOUISIANA SELECTED TO PARTICIPATE?

Four dioceses are selected to participate in the Diocesan Vitality Initiative each year. With a willingness to ask and answer tough questions, our diocese meets the recommended characteristics for success:

- Faith that compels focus on the new thing God is doing
- Willingness to define a path beyond tweaks and technical fixes to a culture of adaptability
- Courage to disrupt systems that no longer service the mission of the diocese
- Tenacity to develop practices and structures that reimagine deploying human, financial, and physical assets to do the work of becoming a Beloved Community

### WHO IS ON OUR DIOCESAN VITALITY INITIATIVE COMMITTEE, AND HOW WERE THE MEMBERS SELECTED?

Bishop Duckworth was asked to invite 5 to 6 individuals to join her on this committee that could represent the varying voices from within the larger diocese and bring a diverse set of expertise.

The members include the following:

- The Rt. Rev. Shannon Duckworth: 12th Bishop of the Diocese of Louisiana
- The Rev. Canon Morgan MacIntire: Canon to the Ordinary
- The Rev. Christopher Duncan: Rector of St. James, Baton Rouge
- Keith Crawford: Member of Trinity, New Orleans; Diocesan Treasurer; CFO at Petermayer Marketing Agency
- Catherine Harrell: Member of St. James, Baton Rouge; Communications and Marketing Consultant
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## Diocesan Vitality Initiative FAQs

### WHAT ARE THE FOCUS AREAS FOR THE DIOCESE OF LOUISIANA?

For our initial work, we are focusing on mission-focused budgeting, property insurance, and communications.

### WHY ARE THESE AREAS CONSIDERED THE PRIORITIES FOR OUR DIOCESE?

These focus areas were identified due to their universal significance to every congregation and institution and the diocese as a whole. Today, continual pressures of maintaining property insurance and fiscal management challenge us all. Responsible approaches for both are essential to sustaining the business organization structure supporting our ministries. Communication is the two-way connection between the diocese and its congregations.

We have many channels through which we can share information, create experiences, and build trusting relationships as the Body of Christ.

### WHO DECIDES ON RECOMMENDATIONS THAT ARE MADE THROUGH THIS INITIATIVE?

The Diocesan Vitality Initiative Committee can only make recommendations. The nature of those recommendations will define who has the authority to implement them. In some instances, Bishop Duckworth will be able to act, and in other instances, an initiative will need the approval of the Executive Board and/or Diocesan Convention.

### HOW LONG IS OUR FORMAL COMMITMENT TO THE DIOCESAN VITALITY INITIATIVE?

We have committed to this process and are working with our cohort partner dioceses through 2024. However, significant change does not happen overnight, and elements of this work will continue into 2025 and beyond. Informally, we hope to continue our friendships and learning beyond the scope of this particular commitment.

### HOW WILL THE DIOCESE GET UPDATES ABOUT THE INITIATIVES' WORK?

The committee will send progress reports every three to four months, with additional updates Bishop Duckworth provides during parish visits. We also anticipate reporting at our Diocesan Convention in the fall of 2024.

### WHAT IS THE EXPECTED OUTCOME AT THE END OF THIS INITIATIVE?

Success for each diocese will look different based on its unique location, population, culture and history. We expect to understand ourselves more deeply and to have clear intentions and structure for using our resources with supportive engagement throughout our diocese. We are open to honoring our past while being hopeful and responsible for our future.