

Mission Leadership Review Episcopal Diocese of Michigan

**REPORT
February 1, 2024**

Prepared for The Rt. Rev. Dr. Bonnie A. Perry

**by Pebble Hill Consulting LLC
The Rev. Gay C. Jennings**

O God of unchangeable power and eternal light:
Look favorably on your whole Church,
that wonderful and sacred mystery;
by the effectual working of your providence,
carry out in tranquility the plan of salvation;
let the whole world see and know that things
which were cast down are being raised up,
and things which had grown old are being made new,
and that all things are being brought to their perfection
by him through whom all things were made,
your Son Jesus Christ our Lord;
who lives and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Book of Common Prayer

Section I. Mission Leadership Review Overview

A mission leadership review is a process designed to review and assess the state of the diocese, its participation in God’s mission, and diocesan leadership including the bishop. A mission leadership review is not a comprehensive evaluation or audit of the diocese as a whole, and it is not an actionable performance evaluation of the bishop or members of diocesan staff.

The process is narrative based on interviews with the bishop, members of the bishop’s staff, and diocesan leaders, both lay and ordained. The same questions are used in every interview. The consultant and bishop develop the interview questions beginning with a standard set of questions developed by the consultant and used in other settings.

Bishop Perry, in consultation with the Standing Committee, contracted with Pebble Hill Consulting LLC to conduct a mission leadership review beginning in October 2023 with the final report due in early February 2024.

Section II. Mission Leadership Review Process

In October 2023, the interview questions and list of people to be interviewed were compiled by the consultant and Bishop Perry and subsequently reviewed by the Standing Committee.

The same questions were used in each individual and each group interview.

General Questions

- ❖ How would you describe the culture of the diocese?
- ❖ What is going well in the diocese?
- ❖ What do you wish would be going better? What needs attention?
- ❖ What are the opportunities for the diocese?

The Episcopacy

- ❖ How do you experience the bishop?
- ❖ What has been the impact of her ministry?
- ❖ What does Bishop Perry do best?
- ❖ What could Bishop Perry do better?

Structure and Resources

- ❖ What is most helpful about the way the diocese is structured?
- ❖ What is least helpful and undermines or threatens mission?
- ❖ If you could change one thing, what would it be?
- ❖ What else do I need to know?

Interviews were conducted beginning November 16. All interviews were completed by December 16. A total of twenty-six interviews including a total of forty-five people were conducted by the consultant. All interviews were held via Zoom.

Individual Interviews (19 people)

- | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| 1) Bishop | The Rt. Rev. Dr. Bonnie A. Perry |
| 2) Executive Assistant to the Bishop | Susan Mason |
| 3) Canon to the Ordinary & Chief Operating Officer | Canon Jo Ann Hardy |
| 4) Canon for Cong Development & Transitions | The Rev. Canon Ellen P. Ekevag |
| 5) Canon for Finance & Chief Financial Officer | Canon Mark Miliotto |
| 6) Accountant | Kara Chapman |
| 7) Director Of Administration | Crystal Ramirez |
| 8) Missioner for Spirituality & Race | The Rev. Sister Veronica Dunbar |
| 9) Associate for Transitions & Local Formation | The Rev. Susan A. Shaefer |
| 10) Missioner for Ministry with Young People | Carmen Piggins |
| 11) Director of Communications | Dennis Boyd Jr. |
| 12) Archdeacon | The Rev. Timothy W. Spannaus |
| 13) President of the Standing Committee | The Rev. Robert W. Alltop |
| 14) Chancellor | Stephen J. Ott, Esq. |
| 15) Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral | The Very Rev. Dr. S. Scott Hunter |
| 16) Director of Operations, Cathedral Chapter | Ms. Charlotte Comstock |
| 17) End Gun Violence Michigan Coalition | Mr. Ryan Bates |
| 18) Member of Diocesan Council | The Rev. Halim A. Shukair |
| 19) Chair of Commission on Ministry | The Rev. Andrew R. Guffey |

Group Interviews (26 people)

- | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 20) Trustees (2) | The Rev. Philip M. Dinwiddie |
| | The Rev. William T. Roberts |
| 21) Standing Committee (3) | John W. Messimer |
| | The Rev. Robert W. Alltop |
| | The Rev. Jadon D. Hartsuff |
| 22) Standing Committee (2) | The Rev. Andrea B. Martin |
| | Josephine Powell |
| 23) Standing Committee (2) | Shirley E. Lappi |
| | Dr. George W. Swan III |
| 24) Deans (6) | The Rev. Cynthia R. Corner |
| | The Rev. Christine Fentress-Gannon |
| | The Very Rev. Dr. S. Scott Hunter |
| | The Rev. Donna L. McNiell |
| | The Rev. Andrea Morrow |
| | The Rev. Barry Randolph |
| 25) Diocesan Council (5) | The Rev. Emily W. Guffey |
| | The Rev. Maryjane Peck |
| | The Rev. Chris Harris |
| | Jamie Taylor |
| | Michele J. Wogaman |
| 26) Diocesan Council (6) | The Rev. Judith L. Schelhammer |
| | The Rev. Jenny Ritter |
| | Katie Walworth, Luke Thompson |
| | Dr. Edie Wakevainen |
| | Gwyneth Dugliss (COM) |

Section III. SWOT Matrix

A SWOT Matrix is an analytic tool used to understand the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in an organization.

Notes taken during the interviews were transcribed, thematically coded and organized in order to surface patterns, trends, common experiences and opinions as well as divergent experiences and opinions. Based on the interview results, a SWOT Matrix was built to capture a summary of the data leading to the formulation of recommendations.

Description of SWOT Matrix Quadrants

Strengths include what is done well and builds up the diocese. Strengths are an indicator of the faithful and robust ways in which people in the diocese and the diocese as an entity are participating in God's mission. Strengths highlight processes and systems that are strong and identify assets, people, attitudes, experience, knowledge, programs, structures, and initiatives that benefit the diocese as a whole and advance its call to serve.

Weaknesses include what is not going well and what needs attention. This quadrant highlights processes and systems that are not functioning at full capacity, and identifies assets, attitudes, relationships, resources, structures, programs, services, staffing, attitudes, and relationships that are perceived as insufficient or inadequate.

Opportunities are compelling mission possibilities within and beyond the diocese. Emerging internal and external opportunities are future-focused, aspirational, and hopeful.

Threats are the obstacles facing the diocese that can have damaging impact. Threats can be internal or external. Internal threats may include how people live in community, how people do their work and ministry, and issues in the current organizational culture or climate. External threats may include societal, political, environmental, demographic, or technological realities or impending changes that are harmful to the diocese and its participation in God's mission in its context.

The SWOT Matrix could be used to establish priorities for the work of the diocese. Using data from the SWOT, leaders can formulate strategic options that build upon strengths, identify and possibly eliminate weaknesses, capitalize on opportunities, and recognize and manage threats.

The SWOT Matrix for the Episcopal Diocese of Michigan is included in this report.

Section IV. Context, Culture, and Climate

Definitions of terms used in this section:

1) Organizational Identity

- ❖ the features of an organization that members believe are central, enduring, and distinctive

(Albert, S., & Whetten, D. A. (1985). Organizational identity. *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 7, 263–295.)

2) Organizational Culture

- ❖ a system of shared values and beliefs that can lead to behavioral norms that, in turn, guide the way members of an organization approach their work, interact with one another, and solve problems

(Szumal, J.L. & Cooke, R.A. (2019). *Creating Constructive Cultures: Leading People and Organizations to Effectively Solve Problems and Achieve Goals*. Michigan: Human Synergistics International)

3) Psychological Climate

- ❖ the individual employee’s perception of the psychological impact of the work environment on his or her well-being

(James, L. A., & James, L. R. (1989). Integrating work environment perceptions: Explorations into the measurement of meaning. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 74(5), 739–751.)

Culture, the shared values and attitudes of a group or organization such as a diocese, exists in context. When undertaking a mission leadership review, it is critical to understand the context in which people live and serve. The Collect for Guidance in the *Book of Common Prayer* sets forth the essential context for participating in God’s mission, saying that in God “we live and move and have our being.”

We believe in the living God of history — our history. In that same collect, we ask God “to guide and govern us by your Holy Spirit, that in all the cares and occupations of our life we may not forget you, but may remember that we are ever walking in your sight.” This is the fundamental context of our lives as the beloved People of God.

Our identity as Episcopalians — what we hold as central, enduring, and distinctive — is our belief that as God’s beloved children created in God’s image, Jesus calls us to act in sacrificial ways on behalf of others in service to God’s mission of restoring people and the world to wholeness.

Culture is marked by shared attitudes and values. Culture contains the spirit of the community. People described the culture of the diocese as open, flowing, healthy, joyful, and welcoming. People noted that the culture is hopeful, optimistic, positive, supportive, encouraging, congenial, and upbeat.

Particularly notable is the number of people who said the culture of the diocese is evolving and in flux. Bishop Perry is viewed by many as the driving force of culture change and vision in the diocese.

- ❖ *(the culture is) greatly improved with an increased sense of community*
- ❖ *the bishop has represented a sea change in the attitude she brings with a more positive environment and more compassion and concern about people in general*
- ❖ *there is a greater awareness of social justice issues; she saw what was happening in terms of gun violence and she has empowered and encouraged people to make a difference*
- ❖ *the culture is in flux moving from authoritative top-down to something more collegial, dispersed, and more focused on agency than rule following*

The context for our baptismal life in Christ is influenced by the social, political, cultural, religious, economic, and geographic realities within which people live and serve. In the Episcopal Diocese of Michigan, people describe the realities that shape and influence their work and ministry in various ways:

- ❖ *there are geographically different cultures and attitudes including differences among working class, academics, middle and upper class*
- ❖ *our culture is shaped by union/management relationships more than people realize*
- ❖ *the culture is a mixture of the working class ethos of the auto industry and the university communities, and each group thinks the other group is getting more*
- ❖ *political tension that is sometimes hard to navigate in the world and in the parish*

People noted that culture is not cohesive across the diocese, which reflects the lack of homogeneity in the state's culture. Some people described the culture of the diocese as being Detroit-centric:

- ❖ *we suffer an identity crisis outside of Detroit*
- ❖ *people think we are the Diocese of Detroit and therefore urban and African American*
- ❖ *there is a push and pull tension between Detroit and the rest of the diocese and we struggle with that*

- ❖ *the experience of the western part of the diocese is different from Detroit; people outside the city center see themselves on the outside*
- ❖ *there used to be a regular monthly staff day in the western part of the diocese, the impact of losing that has increased the disconnect*

Psychological climate is defined as the individual's perception of the psychological impact of the work environment on his or her own well-being. Components of psychological climate include safety, autonomy, trust, pressure, role clarity, cohesion, support, recognition, and fairness. While the interview questions were not constructed to empirically measure psychological climate, a number of interview responses mentioned aspects of psychological climate in terms of current experience in the diocese. Responses reflect both constructive and negative impact.

Constructive Impact

- ❖ *people can take stands, can disagree, and not be ostracized*
- ❖ *a sense of openness that failure is okay*
- ❖ *clergy relationships with one another feel more connected in a noncompetitive way*
- ❖ *(this is) the first time as a woman my thoughts and opinions are listened to and valued*
- ❖ *the bishop works hard to bring out the best in people in terms of their gifts and talents*

Negative Impact

- ❖ *quite a bit of exhaustion seeps into the diocese*
- ❖ *the diocese values collegiality and simultaneously is siloed*
- ❖ *when a question comes up, the bishop could invite input before answering; she could listen a little more — that she already knows something or experienced it before makes it feel like there is nothing new under the sun and what the person is saying isn't valid or important*
- ❖ *indirect culture, indirect communicators; things can come sideways*

The pace of change is difficult for a few people and they may be slower to adapt and may feel left out or left behind. The level of extroverted energy is challenging for those who are more contemplative and introverted.

Section V. Interview Responses with the Four Quadrants of SWOT

This section of the report focuses on the four quadrants of the SWOT Matrix.

A) Strengths

1) An evolving diocesan culture that is perceived by many as open, welcoming, hopeful, energetic, engaged in the public square, mission-focused, collegial, positive, caring, and enthusiastic

Given the realities and impact of the pandemic, every organization can be considered a startup. Bishop Perry was ordained and consecrated Bishop of Michigan mere weeks before the COVID lockdown. In effect, the diocese had a startup bishop at the same time the diocese was experiencing the impact of the global disruption of the pandemic and was itself suddenly a startup diocese.

The pandemic was devastating for millions of people, yet it had an unexpectedly positive effect on the diocese. The bishop, clergy, and people of the diocese came together in new ways to be the light of Christ to each other and to their communities. Zoom in a time of isolation and fear afforded the people of the diocese the opportunity to get to know their new bishop, and for her to get to know them in a relatively brief period of time.

- ❖ *the pandemic launched us into who we are becoming*
- ❖ *the pandemic forced us together in new ways*
- ❖ *she (Bishop Perry) walked us through the pandemic with grace, admitted it was new to her, and that we're in it together*
- ❖ *the bishop showed great leadership; her instructions were clear and she gave clergy and congregations a freedom to breathe, flexibility*
- ❖ *the first two years (pandemic) were about holding boundaries and saying no, while at the same time encouraging agency and autonomy*

Now four years later, a sizable number of people describe the diocese in positive and constructive ways as open, welcoming, hopeful, energetic, engaged in the public square, mission-focused, collegial, caring, and enthusiastic.

People described the diocese as having a healthy energy with people excited and interested in what is happening. There is a sense of mission, and leaders and staff have confidence in the bishop.

- ❖ *the bishop has a vision of where she wants to go; she is energetic about it and people want to be part of the vision*
- ❖ *people are excited and ready for action*

2) Emphasis on strengthening congregations by investing significant staff time and expertise, resources, and educational opportunities; diocesan staff oriented to assisting congregations by providing resources, information, assistance, and consultation

There is widespread appreciation and gratitude for the ways in which congregational ministry and vitality is prioritized by the bishop and diocesan staff. Clergy and congregational leaders are encouraged to bring concerns and problems to the bishop and staff, which has increased trust and a resulting willingness to be vulnerable. Leaders are aware that pastoral care, financial support, and consultation in a wide variety of areas is available for the asking.

- ❖ *a deepening of knowledge and practices in congregational development through CCD*
- ❖ *there is a level of professionalism in congregational development I haven't seen in other dioceses*
- ❖ *lots of continuing education resources (are available), especially in congregational development*

Clergy and lay leaders expressed appreciation for the “customer-service” orientation of the diocesan staff.

- ❖ *the bishop's staff team is getting out into congregations and being visible;*
- ❖ *if I am not sure where to go for something, Canon Hardy knows everything or where to send you; Ellen Ekevag is doing outstanding work in congregational development; Mark Miliotto is doing extremely well in providing support to congregations;*
- ❖ *the diocese makes resources available*
- ❖ *there is a culture of the diocesan staff working for the congregations in an equipping and helping role*
- ❖ *staff are oriented toward congregational ministry*

3) Visionary, transformative, and pastoral leadership exercised by Bishop Perry, a disrupter of systems and change agent who is also experienced as a compassionate pastor to laity, clergy, and the system

- ❖ *what's going well in the diocese is Bonnie*

Bishop Perry is deeply valued and appreciated. She is described as dynamic, passionate, resolute, energetic, intense, engaged, brilliant, incisive, personable, compassionate, and pastoral. Moreover, when people were asked to describe how they experience the bishop, adjectives were frequently preceded by the words “very” or “really” or “highly.” It was not enough to say the bishop is energetic and pastoral. Rather, the bishop is highly energetic and very pastoral. These descriptors were used over and over again. People described Bishop Perry as genuine and without pretense, down-to-earth, and funny. She brings playfulness and a sense of whimsy to her ministry and people find that appealing. The clergy are especially grateful that she provides pastoral support to them and their families. They appreciate the bishop’s accessibility and availability.

When asked about the impact of her ministry as bishop, people most often cited the sea change and attitudinal shifts she has initiated; a tremendous impact on empowering laity while strengthening the clergy; new energy that fosters experimentation and innovation; prioritizing of congregations; leadership that empowers and encourages people to make a difference in their local communities; and being a recognized and respected political figure working for justice on a statewide level, especially in enacting sensible gun control legislation and putting the Episcopal Diocese of Michigan on the map.

It is unusual for a leader who disrupts a system to also be viewed a pastor to the very same system. Bishop Perry has disrupted the system in the Episcopal Diocese of Michigan, and people feel cared for in the process. Being pastoral and prophetic as well as caring about individual congregations while being a significant force on a statewide level signifies unusual and distinguished leadership.

4) Commitment to public witness and advocacy especially directed to ending gun violence in Michigan and also addressing other important social issues and human need through community engagement

The interviews surfaced widespread support from lay leaders, clergy, and staff for the revitalized emphasis on social justice and community engagement.

- ❖ *congregations and congregational leadership are realizing how much they need to get outside their walls and connect with neighbors and communities, which gives a great deal of hope*
- ❖ *our involvement in End Gun Violence Mission and using our human and financial resources to do so has been a huge success*
- ❖ *there is greater engagement with people beyond our walls; there is a culture of engagement in the public square*

People are energized, engaged, and proud of the justice work and witness taking place.

B) Weaknesses

1) A diocesan culture that is perceived by some as frenetic, unplanned, last minute, disconnected, siloed, and Detroit-centric

As mentioned above in Section IV, the pace of change is difficult for some people, and there are people who feel less connected or less aware of what is happening in the diocese.

- ❖ *(the culture) is frenetic like a popcorn maker and things are popping up all the time*
- ❖ *a frenetic sense experienced everywhere, even in the diocesan/cathedral office*
- ❖ *(the culture) feels impulsive, unplanned, and (I) hear about things at the last minute*

2) Decline in congregational membership, attendance, and revenues; aging buildings and lack of financial resources; loss of young people, declining morale, and loss of confidence

Every diocese in the Episcopal Church faces the reality of small and/or struggling congregations that are contending with aging buildings, aging parishioners, scarce resources, loss of confidence, and for some, the onset of a survivor mentality.

A considerable number of people interviewed are concerned about this challenging reality.

- ❖ *fairly strong contracting of numbers and morale*
- ❖ *we are working so hard to maintain our churches and keep them going*
- ❖ *so many churches are getting smaller due to changes in the culture, demographics, and the impact of the pandemic*
- ❖ *deteriorating buildings which can't be maintained by only a few people*
- ❖ *the state of African American churches is abysmal; there are only five and no people*
- ❖ *some anxiety coming out of COVID with ASA down and young people not as engaged*

3) Late notice and communications from the diocesan office coupled with siloing (in both the diocesan office and congregations) resulting in frustration and loss of effectiveness; need for wider distribution within the diocesan staff of information, knowledge, and institutional history

On the one hand, responses indicate an increased confidence and appreciation in the office of the bishop and diocesan staff as indicated in Section A.2. above

- ❖ *there is a lot of confidence in the office of the bishop*
- ❖ *the office of the bishop and staff are not adversarial or separate but an entity people can work with*

Many leaders and staff hold Canon Hardy in high esteem, and there is gratitude for her institutional memory, knowledge, and wisdom. Leaders and staff alike are concerned that since she is the point of reference, there is a need for a wider distribution of knowledge and information within the staff since Canon Hardy will retire at some point.

On the other hand, responses indicate people are also frustrated by receiving late notice of events or deadlines, finding out details at the last minute, incorrect information included in communications, lack of clarity around and access to opportunities, difficulty with forms, policies, and requirements especially for small parishes, and the need for more direct communication and better coordination of efforts.

Attention to silos in the diocesan office and congregations will have a positive effect on the evolving diocesan culture.

4) Management of the bishop's calendar coupled with the growing expectation that the bishop can and will be everywhere 24/7; the impact of the bishop's pace on the system is both appreciated and a cause for concern; competing demands of visibility and presence vs. time for creative thinking, strategizing, and evaluating

People are thankful that Bishop Perry is present and visible throughout the diocese for visitations, congregational events, diocesan events, pastoral visits, and engagement in the public square, and they admire her energy level.

- ❖ *she is generous with her time and energy*
- ❖ *(she is) a go-getter; works 24 hours a day and doesn't take a break*
- ❖ *her biggest impact has been her public visibility around the diocese; she shows up, always shows up; she's not hard to find*

Also, many staff and some clergy are concerned about the bishop's calendar and the impact on the bishop, the diocesan staff, and the diocese.

- ❖ *(if I could change one thing) I would fix the calendar issue*
- ❖ *(what needs attention) the bishop's calendaring, she needs thinking and conversational time*
- ❖ *her schedule is very tight and it's hard to get time to talk to her although she responds quickly to texts*
- ❖ *she has to focus and she can't be everywhere all the time*
- ❖ *it's hard for some people who to be part of things and want to be supportive to keep up with her pace – you want to meet her expectations*

People expressed concern for the bishop's wellbeing and to a lesser extent, the wellbeing of the staff.

- ❖ *(she) can't actually do all the things at once*
- ❖ *in all her busyness, is she able to stay grounded?*
- ❖ *with her incredible energy, I'm afraid she'll burn herself up – everything seems 24/7*
- ❖ *the bishop is go-go-go all the time; even though it's not a stated expectation, even if you are working 40-50 hours a week, it feels like you should be doing more*
- ❖ *there is no time for recovery for bishop and staff which impacts the staff although she is generous with time off requests*

Bishop Perry is aware her calendar is a problem.

- ❖ *(if I could change one thing) I would get hold of my calendar*

C) Opportunities

1) Continue to strengthen and develop the diocese and its congregations by building resiliency, leveraging areas of promise and growth, fostering experimental innovation, growing community engagement, determining strategic allocation of resources, and exploring adaptive use of buildings and property

Leaders and staff believe that a continuing focus on congregational vitality and sustainability has great promise, and the availability of staff and resources and consultation reduces the fear and anxiety associated with church decline.

This opportunity requires a sense of urgency as well as patience; measurable standards as well flexibility; experimental freedom with the possibility of failure and the need to begin again; attention to technical tweaks alongside adaptive change initiatives.

2) Go all in to foster a culture that is free to experiment, welcomes everyone, prioritizes congregations, invests in public witness and advocacy, and creates adaptive partnerships coupled with aligning structures, resources, and staffing to this vision

The pump has been primed during the last four years. Leaders are excited and ready to jump in the deep water. The majority of leaders interviewed are committed to creating a diocesan-wide culture that is expressive of the needs and hopes of the church in this century.

3) Expand the circle of leaders in congregational and diocesan settings, increase leadership development opportunities to build capacity; review size and function of diocesan governing bodies; review compensation practices

There are caring and competent clergy and lay leaders in the Episcopal Diocese of Michigan who care deeply about the church, and who enthusiastically serve in their parishes as well beyond the walls of their individual congregations. And still, concern was voiced about having enough people to fill both diocesan and congregational leadership roles.

- ❖ *there are fewer laity who are available for leadership positions and we need to grow the labor pool*
- ❖ *need to identify lay people with talent and hone those talents and work with them for leadership roles*
- ❖ *we need to encourage more people of color to be in leadership roles*
- ❖ *(if I could change one thing) there would be more people who are classified as young adults (18-35) in leadership positions*

- ❖ *(if I could change one thing) I would make it easier for people in outlying areas to participate; too Detroit-centric*

A balance of seasoned and new leaders, clergy and lay, brings continuity, historical reference, fresh perspective, and innovative ideas to the task of leadership.

Responses expressed a desire for more leadership development opportunities.

- ❖ *(I) wish there were more training from a diocesan level for key lay leadership positions such as wardens and treasurers and other church officers; this would be a big opportunity to help our churches run better and support lay people*
- ❖ *there used to be Vestry Days*
- ❖ *there is a need to pass on institutional memory...there was no orientation for Standing Committee in November — onboarding helps with role clarity*

It is not surprising that with a decline in membership, the number of people available to serve in leadership positions has decreased.

- ❖ *our structures were designed over time and date from the 1940s and 1950s when the diocese was much bigger and we are struggling with how to fill vacant positions since there are fewer qualified people; four open seats on Trustees, and a hard time coming up with names for Diocesan Council, Standing Committee, and Cathedral Chapter*
- ❖ *most boards have too many people (Diocesan Council is twenty people and the Commission on Ministry is twenty people) which makes them not particularly adaptable; we have chosen to have more people over being nimble which was a good choice twenty years ago*

This leads to an opportunity to review the structure, size, and function of diocesan governing bodies. The size of vestries could also be reviewed if parishes are having difficulty filling vestry positions; a number of dioceses have changed their diocesan canons allowing a reduction in the size of a vestry if the congregation believes that would be strategic.

Concerns about compensation are sprinkled throughout the responses.

- ❖ *(if I could change one thing) being able to solve the tension between wanting to fairly and adequately compensate staff and clergy which we cannot do currently; our greatest fixed cost is what we pay our people and we need to own it*
- ❖ *(if I could change one thing) there would be a diocesan-wide model for clergy compensation increases*

- ❖ *regarding clergy compensation, there is no mechanism in most parishes for merit raises, and this is also not modeled at the diocesan level; an increase of 2% below COLA becomes a benchmark for congregations; you need to leave to get a raise which undermines mission*
- ❖ *college chaplains are paid 60k a year and nothing has increased for 10+ years; was presumed the bishop and staff would figure it out, but Council should make the decision*
- ❖ *I heard at the last compensation committee meeting the question if the bishop really truly is fairly compensated or not*

A comprehensive review of compensation and benefit policies and practices pertaining to lay employees in congregations and diocesan staff, clergy, and the bishop would be an opportunity to ensure fairness and equity. Mission strategy should not rest on the back of inadequate or unfair compensation and benefits for lay employees and clergy.

4) Deepen engagement in the public square, create new opportunities to address racial justice, reparations, and repairing the breach

Interview responses clearly indicate that leaders and staff believe that continuing investment by local congregations and the diocese in community engagement and social justice as a whole is good for many reasons. This sentiment is particularly related to a desire to build on the visible and transformative efforts to end gun violence through enacting sensible gun control legislation.

- ❖ *we have an opportunity with a charismatic and highly social bishop to do something, make a splash, make some noise, and do something radical and exciting and transform some lives not just in our churches but in our communities*
- ❖ *there are lots of opportunities for us as an entity to really stand up for the Gospel in the world and figure out how to meet needs such as food insecurity*
- ❖ *connections with the state government and legislature opens a lot of possibilities for other issues such as poverty and homelessness — leveraging relationships and connection in the political sphere*
- ❖ *Michigan has a justice legacy and we are living into that*

People also view community engagement and addressing issues of social injustice as a way of making the Episcopal Church better known and as a form of evangelism.

- ❖ *how we are perceived in the community is really good for the church*

- ❖ *the more we do in the public arena and find causes people care about, people will know who we are; the only way to draw new people is to show them we care about what they care about*
- ❖ *we have the opportunity to do more, lean in, and become more visible as we do this good work*

Some people articulated a desire and commitment to do more to address racial injustice, and believe the bishop and staff can provide the leadership and encouragement for the diocese to engage in this critical work.

- ❖ *the bishop brought to the diocese the need to be involved in positive social change in gun control and racial justice which are the two hallmarks of how she has changed the diocese*
- ❖ *there is an opportunity to do more work with Black churches*
- ❖ *the door is open to do more work in racial reconciliation.*
- ❖ *huge possibility for work on racial reparations and restoring the breach; redlining in Michigan and all the other historic wrongs in major cities in Michigan*

D) Threats

1) Unavoidable consequences of decline of mainline Protestantism, and religious affiliation and practice in the State of Michigan

The Episcopal Church, like many churches, is experiencing profound change and transition. The Episcopal Church is no longer the church of the establishment, and we function in a post-modern and post-Christendom world. Translation? Most people do not think the church is important and they do not go to church.

Mainline Protestantism continues to decline. The trends facing every mainline Protestant denomination are sobering. The People of God in the Episcopal Diocese of Michigan serve and minister in a world where, according to the Pew Research Center's 2014 Religious Landscape Study¹;

- ❖ 18% of residents of Michigan identify as Mainline Protestants and only 1% identify as Episcopalians in contrast with the 25% who identify as Evangelical Protestant
- ❖ 24% of residents of Michigan are unaffiliated (Religious “nones”)
- ❖ 32% of adults seldom or rarely attend religious services with an additional 35% attending once or twice a month or a few times a year
- ❖ 62% of adults in Michigan seldom or never participate in prayer, scripture study, or religious education groups, although 53% pray daily.

Nationally,

- ❖ 10% of younger millennials, 10% of older millennials, 25% of Generation X, 36% of Baby Boomers, and 17% of the Silent Generation identify as Mainline Protestants
- ❖ only 26% of parents with children under age 18 are Mainline Protestants.

While the Pew Religious Landscape Study was conducted in 2014, there is little data to suggest these trends have been reversed in the intervening years. The study presents detailed research data on religious affiliation, beliefs and practices, and social and political views. The full study may be accessed at this link: [Religion in America: U.S. Religious Data, Demographics and Statistics | Pew Research Center \(pewforum.org\)](https://www.pewforum.org/2014/08/05/religion-in-america-u-s-religious-data-demographics-and-statistics/)

If more information on the state of religious life and religious institutions is of interest, the Pew Research Center provides significant information and interpretation of data in their research reports and newsletter found at [Religion - Research and data from Pew Research Center](https://www.pewforum.org/2014/08/05/religion-in-america-u-s-religious-data-demographics-and-statistics/).

¹ [Adults in Michigan - Religion in America: U.S. Religious Data, Demographics and Statistics | Pew Research Center](https://www.pewforum.org/2014/08/05/religion-in-america-u-s-religious-data-demographics-and-statistics/)

2) Long-term sustainability and viability of many congregations in the diocese given loss of people, revenue, confidence, and in some places, hope; nostalgia for the way things used to be and change viewed as loss

The church is experiencing social dislocation and organizational challenges on every level – local, diocesan, provincial, and churchwide. Leaders and staff are acutely aware of the perils of this time.

- ❖ *there is no real answer and we need to figure it out*
- ❖ *everyone wants the playbook on congregational growth and decline but there isn't one*
- ❖ *there are more and more signs of a paradigm shift*
- ❖ *we are on the edge of another major downsize and it will happen during this bishop's tenure*

Kenneth McFayden, professor of ministry and leadership development at Union Presbyterian Seminary in Richmond, Virginia, wrote compellingly² about congregations in crisis and Christian leadership against a backdrop of what people experience as loss in the church. McFayden's catalog of loss was written in 2012; these losses continue today, and in many cases, were exacerbated by the pandemic.

3) Relational isolation and congregationalism; lack of understanding that the "diocese" is not the diocesan staff or the diocesan office but rather the seventy-five congregations gathered around and connected to one another by their bishop as the symbol of unity

Responses indicated a new emphasis on collegiality and forming relationships and connections.

- ❖ *there is a greater sense of being more than a single congregation and being part of the Episcopal Diocese of Michigan; we know we are part of the diocese in an extra difficult time*

And yet, there were a number of responses indicating people still feel isolated, perhaps as an ongoing consequence of the pandemic. Clergy spoke of the decline of deanery clergy meetings and isolation from colleagues. Lay leaders and clergy spoke about their hope for collaboration and partnership with other congregations.

² [Alban at Duke Divinity School. "A Backdrop of Loss," March 26, 2012](#)

Opportunities mentioned include:

- ❖ *even more collaboration to partner with other churches and co-sponsor events*
- ❖ *parishes working together to explore possibilities of pooling resources and supporting one another*
- ❖ *sharing people in positions such as bookkeeper, hard to find people*
- ❖ *continue finding ways to connect parishes and build strong community*
- ❖ *there is a serious hunger for connection and if we could learn to harness that need and desire without turning it into a task, it could increase vitality*

The threat is that isolation can lead to heightened congregationalism. When conducting the interviews, it was notable that a majority of those interviewed defined “diocese” as the office of the bishop and the diocesan staff located at 4800 Woodward Avenue. A more expansive understanding that the diocese is the seventy-five congregations with the bishop as a symbol of unity connecting all congregations could improve interconnectedness.

4) Implicit difficulty changing organizational culture, which comprises interconnected beliefs, attitudes, values, and behaviors

Changing the culture of any institution, faith-based or secular, is challenging, complex, and takes time. There have been numerous studies about the challenges of culture change and strategies to overcome obstacles in the way of change.

Michael D. Watkins, a professor of leadership and organizational change, describes culture as the organization’s immune system, providing an important clue to why organizational culture is so difficult to change:

Culture is the organization’s immune system. Culture is a form of protection that has evolved from situational pressures. It prevents “wrong thinking” and “wrong people” from entering the organization in the first place. It says that organizational culture functions much like the human immune system in preventing viruses and bacteria from taking hold and damaging the body. The problem, of course, is that organizational immune systems can also attack agents of needed change...³

It is clear that the organizational culture of the Episcopal Diocese of Michigan is changing. Bishop Perry, diocesan leaders, and diocesan staff may want to consider how to sustain culture changes and ministry practices that are having positive effects in the diocese.

³ Michael D. Watkins, “What is Organizational Culture? And Why Should We Care?” Harvard Business Review, May 15, 2013.

Sustaining culture change requires aligning culture, structure, and strategy in service of vision and mission. It does not happen without planning and management. Fostering an emerging culture necessarily requires making changes to support the new culture. Frequent and diverse methods of telling the story and articulating the vision during a change process is essential. The more people telling the story and articulating the vision, the better.

In a study about sustaining organizational culture in healthcare systems, researchers identified guiding principles that are relevant to other institutions and organizations, including the church.⁴ Six guiding principles were identified:

- ❖ align vision and action
- ❖ make incremental changes within a comprehensive transformation strategy
- ❖ foster distributed leadership
- ❖ promote staff engagement
- ❖ create collaborative relationships
- ❖ continuously assess and learn from change

The researchers found that these guiding principles interact with contextual elements such as local power distributions, preexisting values and beliefs, and readiness to engage. The ways in which the guiding principles influence and sustain cultural change include a shared sense of urgency and fostering flexible levels of engagement. Thinking about the guiding principles in the context of a diocese could prove valuable.

⁴ Willis CD, Saul J, Bevan H, Scheirer MA, Best A, Greenhalgh T, Mannion R, Cornelissen E, Howland D, Jenkins E, Bitz J. Sustaining organizational culture change in health systems. *J Health Organ Manag.* 2016;30(1):2-30. doi: 10.1108/JHOM-07-2014-0117. PMID: 26964847.