

# AN ACTION PLAN FOR CONTEXTUAL MISSION & NEW WORSHIPPING COMMUNITIES

## Introduction

Our Synod of 2022 unanimously approved Proposal 3 from the Shape of Parish Ministry Consultation and committed us to the vision of being a diocesan church in which contextual mission becomes a core component of our identity and a core competency of our lay and ordained leadership. Contextual mission is to be the animating praxis of our life together, or in other words, who we are and what we do. At all levels of our diocesan church, we are committed to discovering new ways of being and doing church in response to the times in which we find ourselves.

This Action Plan is intended to support the people and parishes of our diocese as we embark on this journey together. It has been prepared by the following people, appointed in consultation with the Bishop: Archdeacon Mark Whittall (Lead), Maritsa Odabashian, Rev. Michael Garner, Paul Mugarura, Ryan Paulsen, Rev. Simone Hurkmans, Rev. Thomas Brauer.

## What is Contextual Mission?

Contextual mission is the response we give to the question “how is God calling us to proclaim the good news in our time and place?” It means learning how to share the love of God in ways that are aware of the cultures and situations of people in the wider community. It is how we as a church respond to the Great Commission to “go and make disciples of all nations.”

(Matthew 28.19).

We live in a multicultural country and every part of our diocese has its own diverse context. Every parish of our diocese is part of a local story that has history, hopes, needs, and fears.

Contextual mission involves listening to the local story and understanding the situations of people who are not part of our church. It involves learning how to listen to God as we listen to and see what is happening around us—so we can share the love of God and the good news we have been entrusted with in ways that are responsive to our context.

Contextual mission requires us to listen, to collaborate, to adapt, to work with others and to build community. Contextual mission also involves becoming aware of the boundaries that prevent us from building meaningful relationships with people in the wider community (especially boundaries we have created). It requires developing openness and humbleness, and a willingness to change ways of speaking or acting in order to reach others while being true to ourselves – and to do all this in collaboration with the people we would seek to serve.

It also requires taking time for a parish to become aware of the gifts and resources it possesses, and how they might be offered in new ways. As we listen to our neighbours and, with them, assess the needs of the communities we serve, we also assess the resources that we have which may help meet those needs. This will inform the planning we undertake to determine how we might partner with others in the community to meet the assessed needs together.

Any parish of any size in every part of our diocese—rural, village, town or city—can learn about and benefit from doing contextual mission.

Here's one example: one of our parishes has had a Christmas fair that focused on crafts for many years. However, a few years ago some members of the parish realized that the needs of their neighbours had shifted. They had lots of places to buy Christmas gifts, but they didn't have enough time to do everything they needed to do. So, after listening to their neighbours, the parish changed the focus of its Christmas fair from crafts to the provision of frozen meals, much to the delight of the neighbourhood.

Contextual mission can lead to a great variety of initiatives both large and small: anything from acts of loving service, to partnerships with other organizations (that may reach well beyond the local community), to new worshipping communities.

### **What do we mean by New Worshipping Communities?**

One of the key expressions of mission in both the New Testament and the life of the Church over 2000 years is the establishment of new worshipping communities. The Great Commission is a call to baptize, including the incorporation of new believers into a worshipping community. One of Paul's strategies in response to his calling was to establish new worshipping communities. The whole of the book of Acts calls the Church in its apostolic inheritance to continue the work of forming and building new worshipping communities.

A new worshipping community (NWC) is a gathering of people where Christian faith is nourished and discipleship practised. When we talk about new worshipping communities, we mean this in a few specific ways:

- i) By 'new... community' we mean a community that may be born out of our inherited congregations and outreach programs or born out of a unique prompting of God (whether it is happening in a church building or not, led by lay or clergy).
- ii) By '...worshipping community' we mean that it is a community that nourishes and practices discipleship in Jesus Christ and has the capacity to evolve into a community of word, sacrament, and pastoral care.
- iii) By 'new worshipping community' we mean that it may be a new church plant within our Anglican heritage, or something else, new, and noticeably different from what we might expect of inherited, Sunday-morning-style expressions of worship and community.

NWCs may come together to express our faith in varied ways. NWCs can range from "Messy Church" gatherings to the launch of new congregations in new neighbourhoods. Pub churches, outdoor churches, dinner groups, intentional communities, or worship gatherings around a particular liturgical style or supporting a particular demographic may all be examples of new worshipping communities. In our diocese, St. James Perth created Skater Church, a NWC that gathered youth around a shared interest in skateboarding.

We have good news to share and we believe that we are called to share this good news in community with as many people as we can. Our Anglican tradition is life-giving and has much to offer those seeking community. Doing contextual mission sets the stage for creating new worshipping communities. We cannot presume to share our Christian faith without knowing and understanding people beyond our current membership, and what we are called to do in order to provide them with opportunities to find a spiritual home in which they can experience the life-changing good news of Jesus Christ.

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## Developing Strategies to Engage with the World

Updated 2023-10-02

There is reason to believe that creating new worshipping communities is a good way to foster thriving and renewal in many of our parishes: they best reach new generations, new residents, new groups; and they are agents of cultural change and aid in the renewal of the whole Body of Christ.

NWCs can be created by any parish of any size in every part of our diocese—rural, village, town or city—who has first done the basic work of contextual mission. Consider that creating NWCs is in our DNA as Anglicans in our diocese of Ottawa. Every parish in our diocese was once a NWC at some point over the past two hundred years

### **Our Vision**

We will be a Spirit-led Church equipped for contextual mission through the implementation of Shape of Parish Ministry Consultation (SPMC) actions to enable, support, resource, and nurture practical and spiritual renewal amongst the lay and clergy leadership of our parishes and congregations.

Every parish and congregation of our diocese will be engaged in contextual mission, with each one initiating or collaborating on at least one identifiable new venture by 2028.

By 2032, the 135th anniversary of the founding of our diocese, we will have created 35 new worshipping communities, in a great variety of shapes and sizes.

### **The Action Plan**

#### **A) A Time of Prayer - Listening for Divine Sparks in our Midst**

Engagement in contextual mission (and the creation of new worshipping communities) across our diocese must be rooted in and will benefit from a significant and concerted effort of prayer by all members of our diocesan community.

1. We will launch a diocesan-wide initiative called “A Time of Prayer: Listening for Divine Sparks in our Midst” calling on all parishes, groups and individuals in our diocese to participate in regular prayer to discern where God wants us to act.
2. Our Bishop will appoint a working group to pray for, oversee, and implement “A Time of Prayer”.
3. We will identify a point person in each parish and group for “A Time of Prayer”
4. We will generate the prompts, resources and prayers to be used by parishes and groups as part of “A Time of Prayer”
5. We will share the opportunity to join quarterly diocesan-wide prayer groups with each parish. These facilitated prayer groups would involve time for communal prayer and a feedback mechanism for reporting back on any insights gleaned.
6. We will encourage the creation of small groups within parishes that pray specifically for divine sparks within the parish and our diocese.

### **B) Establishing and overseeing the practice of Contextual Mission**

Our Bishop, Diocesan Council and other lay and clergy leaders will play an essential role in the support, monitoring, evaluation and communications related to contextual mission and new worshipping communities, consistent with our diocesan priority of communications and our practice of monitoring, reviewing and renewing our ministries and initiatives.

7. Diocesan Council will set up a Sub-committee for Contextual Mission (CMS) under the ADO Education Committee. The Appendix shows the proposed terms of reference for the CMS.
8. The CMS will champion, support, monitor and implement contextual mission and the creation of new worshipping communities across our diocese.
9. The work of the CMS will be reviewed by Diocesan Council in the fall 2024, to determine the additional resources required to implement the current action plan, and how these are to be funded.
10. The CMS will prepare a self-evaluation tool to be used by the leadership of contextual mission initiatives and NWCs, and, if applicable, their parish sponsors. Leaders of new initiatives will complete the self-evaluation and share with the CMS on a regular basis. This self-evaluation tool will be tested using pilot projects, modified and used for subsequent initiatives.
11. Our diocesan Director of Communications and Development will develop a communications plan for contextual mission and NWCs to be approved by the CMS which will ensure that there is regular and widespread promotion and reporting on contextual mission and NWC initiatives in our Diocese. Contextual Mission and NWCs will be highlighted on the ADO website.
12. The CMS will evaluate progress on parish participation, the initiation of new ventures and the implementation of the current action plan on a quarterly basis.

### **C) Supporting Leaders, Lay and Clergy**

Contextual mission—and the creation of new worshipping communities—requires imagination, initiative, and leadership. Leaders of Contextual Mission and NWCs must be supported, and the formation of leaders, both lay and clergy, is essential, and will include the following.

13. A Knowledge Network (see Action 1) for Contextual Mission and NWCs to provide leaders and potential leaders of new initiatives with peer support, informal mentoring, prayer support and curated resources.
14. Qualified coaches for leaders of Contextual Mission and NWC initiatives.
15. Symposia for lay and clergy leaders of Contextual Mission and NWC initiatives.
16. Opportunities to participate in courses and workshops in Missional Leadership (such as those offered by the Niagara School of Missional Leadership and by New Leaf Network).
17. Formation in Contextual Mission and NWCs will be required of all Postulants of our diocese.
18. Formation in Contextual Mission and NWCs will be delivered as a module of the Fresh Start program to all clergy in new parish appointments.
19. Orientation to Contextual Mission and NWCs will be provided to all Licensed Lay Readers of our diocese.

### **D) Supporting Parishes and Congregations**

Contextual mission and New Worshipping Communities will, in most instances, be initiated by the people of our parishes and congregations. We will support our parishes and congregations in the following ways:

20. A Step-by-step guide to engaging in Contextual Mission and New Worshipping Communities will be prepared for use by parishes and other interested groups of our diocese. The ADO workbook “Serving God’s World” will be reviewed for use by parishes as a resource.
21. The Parish Advancement Program (see Action 10) will develop a training video which will serve to introduce parishes to Contextual Mission and New Worshipping Communities.
22. A team of facilitators will be identified and trained so that they can visit parishes and: a) lead interactive workshops on Contextual Mission and New Worshipping Communities; b) assist parishes in assessing potential new initiatives; c) advise parishes with respect to the resourcing of new initiatives. Facilitators may include graduates of the School for Parish Development
23. An appropriate multi-session course will be identified for the formation of our parishes in Contextual Mission and NWCs.

### **E) Financial Resources**

Contextual mission and NWCs must be well resourced to thrive in our diocese. Necessary resources include funding, human resources, formation, prayer support and leadership development. Financial support is critical. Many parishes are already doing contextual mission using existing budgets and donor support. We envision that there will be multiple sources of funding and other resources for contextual mission and NWCs in our diocese.

Our diocese itself is an important source of financial support and has already created the “Future Fund” which is dedicated to the funding of new worshipping communities and contextual mission. As of June 30 2023, there is \$1.57 million in the Future Fund.

24. Our diocese will identify new sources of funding that will be used to grow the Future Fund and to replenish it as drawdowns are made to fund contextual mission and NWCs
25. The Future Fund will be used to establish a microgrant program to support contextual mission and NWCs. Parishes and other groups will be eligible to apply for grants on a semi-annual basis.
26. The Future Fund will be used on a discretionary, opportunistic basis to support larger contextual mission and NWC opportunities. Discretionary funding of opportunities will
27. Parish funds used to support new contextual mission initiatives and NWCs will be exempt from assessment for Parish Fair Share.
28. Annual costs related to items 4, 14, 15, 16, and 23 above are included in our Diocesan Operating Budget

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### **Timeline:**

#### A) A Time of Prayer – Listening for Divine Sparks in our Midst

- Oct 2023 Launch

#### B) Establishing and overseeing the practice of Contextual Mission

- Nov 2023 CMS appointed
- March 2024 First Quarterly Review of Contextual Mission and New Worshipping Communities

#### C) Supporting Leaders, Lay and Clergy

- Feb 2024 Courses and Workshops for Leaders available
- April 2024 Launch Knowledge Network (peer support)
- June 2024 Coaching for Leaders available

#### D) Supporting Parishes

- March 2024 Step-by-step Guide available
- May 2024 Facilitators available
- Sept 2024 Multi-session course available

#### E) Financial Resources

- May 2024 Launch first round of microgrants

### **Appendix: Terms of Reference for a Contextual Mission Sub-committee**

#### **Context:**

Proposal 3 of the Shape of Parish Ministry Consultation committed us to the vision of being a diocesan church in which contextual mission becomes a core component of our identity and a core competency of our lay and ordained leadership. The Contextual Mission Sub-committee (CMS) shall undertake this task.

#### **Mandate:**

To play an essential role in the monitoring, support, evaluation and communications related to contextual mission and new worshipping communities, consistent with our diocesan priority of communications and our practice of monitoring, reviewing and renewing our ministries and initiatives.

#### **Accountabilities, Authority and Responsibilities**

The CMS is a sub-committee of the Education Committee (EC) and is accountable through the EC to Diocesan Council.

The Education Committee has authority over CMS on matters related to programs, services, and budgets within its mandate.

The CMS will champion, monitor, support and implement contextual mission—and the creation of new worshipping communities across our diocese; including supporting parishes and Leaders of new initiatives. The CMS will prepare a self-evaluation tool to be used by the leadership of contextual mission initiatives and NWCs, and, if applicable, their parish sponsors.

#### **Membership and Composition**

The CMS will include a diverse mix of clergy and lay members, as well as a Chair. Ideally, these roles will represent both urban and rural communities. Membership should also reflect expertise in the substantive and practical requirements of the PAS mandate.

Membership will be determined by the EC in consultation with the Bishop.

#### **Meetings**

The CMS will meet as required to meet its mandate