***Adapting the Province to Serve Our Church Better for Upcoming Decades:***

***Report to Province 3 Provincial Synod***

**March 18, 2016 –Final Report**

Presented By Ad Hoc Committee on Provincial Restructure:

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***Introduction:***

At the October meeting of the Provincial Council, a subcommittee was appointed to recommend initiatives which would improve how our Province functions and delivers its services to its member dioceses and parishes, as well as the clergy and lay leaders in those thirteen dioceses. The Subcommittee met by conference call, and collaborated on this report, collecting ideas on ways to improve our work and life together.

Put simply, the report recommends substantial changes in the Provincial function and focus as we adapt the church to function in geographically dispersed locations where technology makes remote collaboration far more practical – as well as much more essential – to support each other in ministry across this region.

The primary change is to place much greater emphasis on shared ministries and support for each other across diocesan lines, taking much greater advantage of web-based and other technologies to allow remote collaboration in training, teaching, and mutual support. Proposed resolutions and proposed revisions to our Provincial Ordinances to help implement such changes will be circulated soon and an informal briefing will occur to answer questions the Sunday evening, April 24, before the first session of the Provincial Synod on Monday, April 25.

***Background***

This report identifies some very significant opportunities to improve ministry across the thirteen dioceses of Province 3 of The Episcopal Church (TEC). Those thirteen are located in the states of Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, and the District of Columbia, a geographic area of 128,000 square miles. There are about 300,000 reported members, of whom just under 100,000 attend church each Sunday, in just under 1,200 parishes. We are unevenly spread out, but widely dispersed, on average with less than 3 Episcopalians per square mile of the province. We are not growing much and in some areas our numbers are declining.

Currently, only two of our thirteen dioceses have more than one bishop, and few of our dioceses can support a staff much larger than that of medium sized parish. Many parishes, especially in rural areas with a declining population, are unable to support a full time, seminary trained member of the clergy.

Our church’s geographic dispersion, declining numbers, and strained financial resources suggest that we must adapt in order to make our ministries more effective. Many secular institutions, both for-profit, and non-profit, face similar challenges. They are meeting them by using shared services and relying heavily upon web-based consultations and training to deliver those shared services. They do so because it makes economic and administrative sense, because their competitors are doing it, and because their “customers” expect it of them.

Our demographics, finances, and actions by TEC in devolving functions to dioceses and parishes, suggest strongly that if our dioceses and parishes are to remain viable, we need to adapt. We can do so by sharing diocesan (or Provincially-based) expertise across diocesan lines, and by using web-based techniques to make such support of high quality, easy to access, and in common use by lay leaders and clergy alike.

While no one diocese has the capability to undertake such an effort by itself, our thirteen dioceses, acting collectively through our Province, will be operating at a scale where such collective effort is economically sensible, administratively practical, and may make our ministries work much better across a wide area.

Part 1 of this paper provides an analysis of our current situation as thirteen dioceses and as Province 3. Part 2 outlines a path forward to a shared services model, including changes needed in our Provincial operations, ordinances, and financial expectations. At the April 2016 Provincial meeting, appropriate changes will be proposed in order to aid these efforts to share our diocesan and provincial expertise.

1. **Province 3: Current Circumstances**
2. **Overview**

Province 3 of The Episcopal Church (TEC) has the potential to provide stronger support to our thirteen dioceses than it has in the past. This will become more important for two reasons.

First, the small size, rural location, shrinking membership and aging demographic of most of our dioceses will continue to squeeze smaller dioceses so that they will struggle just to provide basic canonical functions to their parishes, clergy and lay leaders. Baby boomers are retiring at an increasing rate and younger adults are moving away in search of better job opportunities. Most of rural America is in a serious economic decline, challenging organizations which are committed to providing services to the small communities which characterize these areas. This is not merely a religious denominational phenomenon; it affects, for example, the U.S. Post Office among other organizations.

Second, General Convention has voted to reduce diocesan assessments payable to the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society (DFMS). The trade-off will be reduced staff and financial support of diocesan programs. The fancy term for this change is devolution.

As a practical matter, however, most of our thirteen dioceses are too small to provide first class support for the many important ministries we as TEC want our parishes, clergy, and people to perform. By the same token, providing training and support for such ministries may be economically and logistically feasible at the provincial level.

In order to perform these functions well at the provincial level, however, the Province will need to change the way it does business as follows:

By making electronic and virtual meetings the norm;

By identifying centers of excellence in different dioceses and making that expertise available across the province; and

By fostering much closer collaboration across diocesan boundaries by our lay and clergy leaders performing similar ministries.

This paper and related proposals are intended to identify the changes needed in order to enable the Province to provide stronger shared services in support of our common ministries.

1. **Provincial Ministries and Networks**

Our review of information and discussions with other Provincial colleagues indicates that Province 3 functions better than most provinces in the Episcopal Church. The Provincial Synod provides a regional forum in triennial years for Bishops and Deputies to General Convention to meet with the Presiding Bishop, the President of the House of Deputies and key TEC staff regarding issues coming up at General Convention. In 2014, it also provided an excellent place for TREC task forces to meet with interested deputies and bishops.

A useful recent history of the Province, including a more detailed review of accomplishments is attached to this report. Important work in support of the Diocese of Pittsburgh occurred as that Diocese reorganized after 2006. The Province’s campus, health, youth, anti-racism, vocation and altar guild ministries have all been active over the past year, and have done fine work.

The Province is not reaching its potential, however, in that we are largely unknown by most parishes. Most dioceses make no mention of us on their websites or at their conventions, and most of the support available from the Province is unknown to many of the people who need it.

This problem, though quite serious, is clearly capable of correction. We can do so by emphasizing much greater use of remote consultations, equipping and staffing our Province to provide the support for such consultations, and emphasizing shared ministry across diocesan lines facilitated by Province coordinators, Provincial Deputies, Executive Council representatives, and our Bishops.

In addition to the work of the Provincial Coordinator, the current ongoing ministry work of the Province is done mostly by its ministry coordinators, almost all of them volunteers. The most recent list of such ministries, taken from the website, is listed below:

**Province III Ministries**

* [Commission on Ministry](https://province3.wordpress.com/2014/03/01/commission-on-ministry/)
* [Church Periodical Club](https://province3.wordpress.com/2014/02/15/church-periodical-club/)
* [Christian Education](https://province3.wordpress.com/2014/02/01/christ-education/)
* [Anti-Racism Ministry](https://province3.wordpress.com/2014/01/01/youth-ministry/)
* [Youth Ministry](https://province3.wordpress.com/2013/12/15/campus-mission/)
* [United Thank Offering (UTO)](https://province3.wordpress.com/2013/11/02/united-thank-offering-uto/)
* [Small Church Ministry](https://province3.wordpress.com/2013/10/24/small-church-ministry/)
* [Campus Ministries/Higher Education](https://province3.wordpress.com/2013/10/23/higher-education/)
* [Evangelism / Congregational Development](https://province3.wordpress.com/2013/10/23/evangelism-congregational-development/)
* [Episcopal Church Women](https://province3.wordpress.com/2013/10/23/episcopal-church-women/)
* [Communications](https://province3.wordpress.com/2013/10/23/communications/)
* [Justice and Peace](https://province3.wordpress.com/2013/09/23/justice-and-peace/)
* [Health Ministries](https://province3.wordpress.com/2013/08/23/health-ministries/)
* Altar Guild

While the list is long, most of these weblinks are vacant or obsolete, even though there are incumbents for half or more of these positions. On a corresponding note, most of our diocesan websites have no mention of the Province. In at least one diocese, the diocesan staff had to be reminded in the past few years to have elections for Provincial Deputies. The Province, unfortunately, is a well-kept secret.

Little or nothing is spent by the Province on web conferencing capabilities or on developing such. The Provincial website is not updated very often; there is apparently some difficulty doing so. There is difficulty in compiling a current list of provincial deputies, as well as in keeping current on diocesan coordinators of the corresponding ministries. The Province functions unevenly as a network, and in building networks among those with similar ministries and/or who face similar challenges. The Province often has difficulty attracting people to its programs, other than programs related to the upcoming General Convention once every three years.

1. **Dioceses Served and pledges to TEC:**

The provincial website reports that there are 1187 parishes in Province 3 among the 13 dioceses which are the constituent members. The number of parishes may be inaccurate. Six of thirteen dioceses fall substantially short of paying the TEC asking of 19.0%, and these shortfalls are not correlated with the size of the diocese. Current payments of 0.25% to the Province, however, appear to be met by almost all dioceses, perhaps because the figure is quite modest.

The thirteen dioceses, their 2014 communicants and ASA, and the current number of parishes in each, are set forth below:

DIOCESE COMMUNICANTS Ave Sunday No. Parishes 2014 % pledge to TEC

Bethlehem 10,652 3,518 58 5.9% -- $76K

Central Pennsylvania 12,570 4,435 21.4% -- $242k

Delaware 9,645 3,422 18.3% -- 228k

Easton 7,974 2,714 38 19.0% -- 104k

Maryland 39,982 10,256 17.5% -- 546K

Northwestern Pa. 3,445 1,385 19.0% -- 139K

Pennsylvania 43,451 13,188 4.8% -- 225k

Pittsburgh 8,709 2,375 11.1% -- 150k

Southern Virginia 27,194 9,632 9.0% -- 153k

Southwestern Virginia 10,593 4,166 19.0%- 148k

Virginia 77,377 23,669 19.1% -- 828k

Washington 40,342 13,330 12.7% -- 449k

West Virginia 8,106 2,759 11.1% -- 189K

**Province 3 Total**  300,040 94,730

For the most part, membership figures are flat or have been declining over the past five years. Part of the decline is apparently driven by wider demographic trends, as the populations in rural dioceses tend to be older on average, and those areas tend to grow slowly or not at all. And part of the decline is likely to reflect the broader social trend over the past decade (and longer) of decreasing church affiliation for almost all denominations.

1. **Provincial Budget**

The 2016 apportionments, as reflected in the draft budget for 2016, are shown below. They indicate some decline based on declining diocesan income:

Diocese 2015 apportionment 2016 apportionment

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Bethlehem | 3,504.00 | | 2,799 |
| Central PA | 3,807.00 | | 3,807 |
| Delaware | 3,759.00 | | 3,367 |
| Easton | 1,680.00 | | 1,963 |
| Maryland | 7,636.00 | | 8,458 |
| NW PA | 2,004.00 | | 2,354 |
| Pennsylvania | 11,099.00 | | 9,114 |
| Pittsburgh | 2,870.00 | | 3,447 |
| So. VA | 4,785.00 | | 3,687 |
| SW VA | 2,422.00 | | 2,422 |
| Virginia | 11,786.00 | | 12,025 |
| Washington | 8,976.00 | | 8,976 |
| West Virginia | 5,086.00 | | 4,967 |
| Total 2015 69,414.00 | | Total 2016 67,386 | |
|  | |  | |

The 2016-18 denominational budget phases out payment for provincial coordination, except for Province 9. Thus, in 2016 there is $80K to be shared among Provinces 1 - 8; in 2017 $40K to be shared among the eight; and in the 2018 budget, zero dollars. Our provincial coordinator reports that Province 3 received $10,500 from TEC in 2015. This funding will disappear by 2018. Similarly, TEC grants to specific ministries carried out by the Province, such as Campus ministry, have also disappeared.

1. **Opportunities for Shared Ministry Supported by Networked Resources: Web-based Conference and Consultation Capabilities and the Shared Services Model**

Despite current budget issues and declining or flat membership, developments over the last fifteen years in web-based conferences and consultation by Skype or similar video-conference capabilities opens up an inexpensive means to improve our collective ministries. We can make capable consultants available for remote consultation across the Province. We can conduct conferences available to far more people and far more often if we do so using web-based capabilities. We can enhance continuing education for our clergy and lay leaders. We can make available first-class, interactive training in Christian Education widely available to our church school leaders. We can train people in the “nuts and bolts” of church administration and address issues of sexual misconduct and racism.

The devolution of many functions from the denominational level, as well as budget pressures at the diocesan and parish levels, suggest strongly that it makes good economic and business sense to use shared programs across dioceses.

Despite this great potential, our Province has not to date made much use of remote conferencing capabilities. The UTO coordinators, however, report that UTO is making effective use of such web conferencing for the purpose of discussing grant allocations. Many interim TEC bodies meet only once in person during a triennium, and the remaining times by web conference or conference call.

Many universities conduct courses on-line. In addition, many professional organizations, e.g. the American Bar Association or the Environmental Law Institute, offer most of their continuing education offerings by web conference or by conference call, with a much smaller set of offerings for in-person attendance.

From a feasibility standpoint, any of our thirteen dioceses or Province 3 itself could hire or contract for such web conferencing services. That technological feasibility raises the possibility that such offerings could be offered (a) remotely, and (b) to an audience of clergy and lay leaders from across the Province.

Similarly, many organizations now use a shared services model, where, for example, technical support for a large organization may be located in Cleveland or Phoenix for support across the United States on computer issues. Medical consultations are now occurring remotely, with good results for rural areas, especially as compared to long travel times and poor access.

From a diocesan perspective, there is no reason consultants could not provide real time remote services and assistance on accounting, communications (e.g. helping prepare electronic newsletters and maintaining diocesan websites), archival questions, legal services (even on a volunteer basis), or even in consulting how to deal with difficult pastoral issues. Similarly, there is no technological reason that able consultants or employees in one diocese could not be made available to help in another.

1. **Recommendations**

This paper is based on two assumptions:

1. Our current Provincial approach to ministry—emphasizing in-person meetings and consultation, diocesan and parish self-reliance (or insularity), and twentieth century organizational models – is less and less effective in this century because of our dispersed and aging population, our declining financial support, and changing public expectations of the church; and
2. There is great potential to overcome these problems by wholeheartedly moving to a model of shared services across dioceses and parishes, delivered through web-based and other remote consultations by those who are expert in meeting needs for training, education, expert consultation, and support.

To date, while TEC at the denominational level has begun to use web-based and similar means to conduct its business, it has not taken the lead at providing support at the diocesan and parish level through such methods. Moreover, as TEC’s financial demands on dioceses are scaled back, the expectation is that such functions will be even more devolved to the diocesan level.

Yet the diocesan level may be too small a scale – and our dioceses too thinly funded – for such devolution to work effectively at that level. Rather, for reasons of common geography, history, and workable scale, our thirteen dioceses would be better served in many cases to work collectively to provide this support on a province-wide basis, even if the resource/consultant were located in one diocese and paid by that diocese as part of our joint contribution to ministry.

Consequently, this paper recommends the following approach, to be taken jointly by our thirteen dioceses, or at least a majority of them, such that we take the following steps, starting at a provincial level in April 2016:

1. Attend the April 2016 provincial meeting in person and make sure provincial deputies and officers do also, so that needed changes can be made to enable virtual meetings and decisions;
2. Identify priority areas for shared services – support across diocesan lines – where it makes sense to provide programming and consultation available by remote means across the thirteen dioceses of the province. As a beginning, providing shared training programs on the following issues may be fruitful to consider:
3. Continuing theological education presentations for clergy and lay leaders. We have many excellent programs across our province, where the lament is sometimes that it is a pity more could not participate. If we were to arrange to provide one to two a month, available by webcast (and later viewing if possible), the resources already invested in one diocese could benefit all thirteen. Likewise, if we promoted existing training opportunities across diocesan lines, clergy and lay leaders could often more easily attend such training in another diocese, geographically closer, than they can in their home diocese. An active policy of publicizing and sharing these resources may have considerable benefit at very little cost.
4. Training and consultation to assist in establishing and supporting ethnic ministries, including but not limited to work in planting and supporting Hispanic congregations, as well as populations such as those of the Dinka and other tribes from South Sudan, and other language or ethnic minorities. There are excellent resources to assist in these efforts in some dioceses; moreover, taken collectively across our Province there may be multiple small ethnic or linguistic minority missions or parishes who would benefit from connections with other such congregations in our Province. This is the case with South Sudanese who have come to this country, as it is with Hispanic congregations, and may be with Vietnamese and Korean congregations.
5. Diaconal training on a shared basis, as is done currently on a joint basis between Virginia and Southern Virginia.
6. Antiracism training and training for prevention of sexual and financial misconduct. Several dioceses offer such training courses, very important steps in loss prevention and protection of our people. The time commitments required, especially when travel is considered, make it unrealistic in many cases to expect widespread participation by lay people. If we can reduce this obstacle, we can better protect people.
7. Christian education resources. We should consider the possibility of setting up some Sunday morning programs, at least among a test group of parishes, as a way to provide first class programming to small parishes. While there will always be issues of start times and interaction, such common resources could be a great help to parishes with only a handful of children or teenagers in a class, and get volunteers out of the difficulty of trying to be experts in all things.
8. Web-based technical support to parishes for websites and IT. Giving parishes access to good web support would be a significant help, especially among smaller parishes.
9. Identify the common technical support in terms of expertise, timing, and contracting which would make sense to provide on a common provincial basis. Almost by definition, providing technical support across diocesan lines would make sense to provide at the provincial level. Moreover, doing so at the provincial level may allow procurement to occur on better terms.
10. Equip the Province to hold regular consultations by conference call and virtual means with provincial and diocesan coordinators in all the areas where the Province has such a coordinator. At present, such consultations occur almost exclusively in person, too seldom to be much help.
11. Agree among diocesan bishops to consult regularly and perhaps as much as monthly by web conference through the Province to aid in these efforts, engaging provincial leaders in that effort.
12. Change provincial rules to enable provincial decision-making by virtual means
13. Hire or contract for the additional personnel and consultants at the provincial level needed to provide the technical support required to provide shared services of the kinds described
14. Address the funding of these efforts at the provincial level, in order to avoid overburdening any specific diocese, while sharing the benefits across all thirteen dioceses.

The committee intends to present its recommendations to the upcoming Provincial Synod in April 2016, and will hold several conference calls in order to promote discussion of these suggested approaches. Copies of the specific resolutions will be circulated soon. It will be especially important for bishops and provincial deputies to attend in April 2016, in particular to make the changes in rules needed to authorize routine business to be conducted by conference call, and other virtual means, in order to speed up decisions and action by the Province.

***Proposed Resolution***

*Resolved*, That the Province III Synod, meeting in Martinsburg, WV, on April 25, 2016, receives with gratitude the Report from the Ad Hoc Committee on Provincial Restructure and refers it to the Provincial Council with the recommendation that the substance of this report be implemented by no later than March 1, 2017, recognizing that an increase in the Diocesan Assessments to the Province will be necessary and appropriate changes to the Provincial staffing resources implemented.