

# **The Iowa Curriculum**

## **Ministry Development Teams**

### **Collaborative Leadership Development**

## **Introduction**

Welcome to the current iteration of the Diocese of Iowa's Ministry Development Curriculum process. The Diocese of Iowa is pleased to offer this guide as the current resource in the process of ministry development and collaborative leadership development in Congregations. The Diocese of Iowa has been forming and training Ministry Development Teams for close to 20 years. Originally implemented to assure consistent access to the Eucharist for all the members of the Episcopal Congregations in the diocese, Ministry Development Teams have responded to God's call to serve throughout the diocese. These teams have been formed through the locally developed "Iowa Curriculum". This formation process is evolving into a more wide spread understanding of collaborative leadership development.

The Diocese of Iowa has seen significant shifts in population as people move from rural to urban centers and young adults leave their hometowns for jobs in larger cities. Many of our smaller communities have experienced population losses and thus experience population losses in church membership. The Diocese of Iowa began this journey 20 years ago, relying on the teaching of St. Paul and the gifts of the Spirit as well as the teaching and reflections of Roland Allen as he lived the belief that every community has the gifts it needs to respond to God's call to mission. We have also been guided by our participation in the Living Stones Partnership. These foundational beliefs still guide this edition of the curriculum. We have become increasingly convinced that the focus must be on the development of the ministry of all the baptized. Ministry is not relegated to only a few, but is the call to all the baptized and probably even broader. We believe vital faith communities empower and support the baptized in living out their calling to share the Good News.

A Ministry Development Team in a congregation guides and supports all members of the congregation in developing their gifts and ministries given by God. The Team looks to Scripture, tradition and the context of the congregation, asking the question, "What is God calling me/us to do?" Leadership examines the big picture, holding before the congregation the vision of baptismal ministry, providing spiritual leadership and direction, and taking the ministry of the congregation beyond the maintenance of the organization and into proclamation of the Gospel.

The focus of the curriculum is the formation and preparation of Ministry Development Teams and Collaborative Leadership and continues to be evaluated and updated to meet the current realities of our Teams and of the diocese. This current edition of the Iowa Curriculum, recognizing that all members of the faith community have gifts important for that community, focuses on competencies. Those committed to this preparation identify the competencies already in use by them and in the community and those that need to be identified and strengthened. Each faith community is different and a formation curriculum needs to be relevant for each

community, therefore an assessment helps determine those skills and abilities already present and those that need to be formed. Training people to recognize the skills and abilities needed by the community will empower the community to continue to thrive despite any shifts in local demographics.

The past curriculum provided the diocese with valuable gifts as it opened the way for many faithful people to explore and grow their ministries and keep an Episcopal presence in many communities throughout the Diocese. As the curriculum was used there was the realization of the need to respond to the diversity existing in our places. This current expression of a curriculum is the next step in this journey of empowering vital Episcopal congregations throughout the Diocese. It hopefully responds to the variety of contexts as well as the diversity in learning styles of adult learners. A belief in the responsibility of each individual to pursue lifelong learning opportunities has helped form this current curriculum. There is flexibility in learning styles as well as types of activities.

The decision for a congregation to identify and support a Ministry Development Team and Collaborative Leadership is guided by the Bishop, Vestry and the Commission on Ministry. Once the congregation has determined to move in this direction, the process called “The Iowa Curriculum” begins. The Commission on Ministry travels with the team as it works through the process of formation and education. A mentor also travels with the team in its work.

The team functions within the congregation as soon as it is able. Some members may already be functioning in certain roles in the congregation when they join the team.

Realizing that “formation takes time” and that people who embark on this journey have a wide variety of life contexts and experiences as well as formal educational experiences, this formation process is designed to take two years to complete; however, each team will be able to decide what they need and their time frame based on their current competencies and the kinds of activities they choose.

Learning to collaborate as a team within a congregation is an important commitment and may mean moving into a different way of being – more of a collaborative leadership model and away from a “one person is the leader” model. This shift will take trust building and confidence building as well as time. The congregation will need to grow as well as the persons in the curriculum process. Time will be spent in reflecting on what is going well in the shifting paradigms and where the rough spots exist. Working together through all the shifts builds the commitment to the faith community and its work.

A definite commitment from each member of the identified team as well as from the congregation to working through this process promises benefits to the faith community and then to the wider community. Because the focus is continually on the development of the ministry of all the baptized, more and more individuals will become confident in their own ministries and grow in their abilities to share this good news with others. The congregation then becomes stronger in its capacity to share this good news with the larger community in which it resides. The faith community continues to contribute to the wider community. The cycle has shifted to

one of rebirth, evolving into a structure and life that support the growing community of faith and the wider local community.

## Program Overview

The study of Scripture is foundational to all our work. The identified team, and any interested person from the congregation, will begin the formal Formation Process with an introduction to the basic text, *Understanding the Bible* by Stephen Harris. This text will be continued throughout the year and can be used as an adult forum class or a separate Bible study class.

The matrix included at the end of this introduction offers a picture of the entire curriculum process. Information and ideas from the document, “Theological Education in the Anglican Communion”, former Iowa and other curriculums, and “Marks of Baptismal Communities” have been used to build this current matrix for formation. Lessons focused on the canonically required formation areas are included also. It is the expectation that this process will provide the team and each individual on the team opportunities to identify the competencies they bring to the process and plan for acquiring new skills and knowledge needed to build and support ministry throughout the congregation. A complete outline of each module and session follows the introductory materials.

Teams are expected to work through each of the eight modules. Modules have no more than six sessions, not including the assessments. A team should consider a two year time frame to complete this curriculum. There is a team assessment and an individual assessment at the beginning of each module which will help determine the kinds and amount of learning that will lead the team and the individual to the competencies identified in each module. There will be skills already apparent in the congregation and team, therefore there may be sessions that do not need as much time as others. Mentors will work through the assessments with the team providing the guidance to recognize skills and abilities already present but maybe unnoticed or unidentified. Individuals bring varying amounts of skills and knowledge to the module. The goal is to have the team know and be able to demonstrate competency in each of the identified modules of the curriculum.

Teams in this process stay in communication with the Commission on Ministry through an assigned liaison from the COM. Teams meet periodically with the COM and the Standing Committee in their formal process toward their commissioning and ordination as a Ministry Development Team.

## How to use this process

The team begins with an introduction to the Bible study text, *Understanding the Bible*. This usually takes the form of a day long gathering for orientation and planning for the long term study. The study of this text continues throughout the first year with teams meeting regularly for conversation on the assignments. This is in addition to the work on the matrix that follows.

The eight modules on the matrix may be divided into two years, with the goal of completing four modules each year. There are certain times in the cycle of the church year that may be more

conducive to intense work than others. The teams will be able to fit the work to their life in the faith community. Each module begins with an outline and primary objective sheet which gives the overall picture of the module. There are four to six sessions (not including the assessments) in each module. For each session there is a chart containing the objectives for the session, readings that may be helpful, suggested activities, journal questions and resources pertaining to the competencies in the session.

It is recommended that Module 1, “Commitment to Living a Christian Life” be completed first, with the rest of the modules completed in any order, not necessarily the order presented in the overview.

Session 1 is always the assessments and is completed first. The rest of the sessions within each module may be completed in any order.

Each team will determine when they meet. Options for team meetings might include:

- Meeting weekly for 2 to 3 hours
- Meeting bi-weekly for 3 to 4 hours
- Meeting monthly in a retreat mode for 6 hours.

It is recommended that the team find at least one hour per month to check in with a mentor from the diocese. This check in may be completed electronically.

There will be circumstances when a congregation includes a part time clergy person who will be part of the process. The clergy person may participate as a team member, a resource person and/or as a mentor. This relationship will more clearly emerge as a team forms.

As the team moves into a regular schedule, the format for its gatherings settles into a routine. Gatherings include the following elements (times are approximate and based on a 2 hour gathering).

|         |   |
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| 15 min. | Gather and worship – This is a time to find out how everyone is doing. Pay attention to the gathering space – is it comfortable, are there refreshments, etc. Experiment with different worship outlines  |
| 20 min  | Scripture study – Team may use the lectionary readings for the week, or other selections  |
| 30 min  | Review of the work that was to be completed by this session. Reflection on the work and learnings, decide if work is finished or needs more attention   |
| 45 min  | New learning for this session – discussions on goals and activities, readings, etc.   |
| 15 min  | <u>Congregational updates</u> – who needs prayers, visits, etc.<br><u>Planning</u> for next gathering – who will do what, resources needed<br><u>Evaluation</u> – how did this meeting go, determine if skills have been practiced enough to be useful, if more instruction is needed, and possibly how to use the various skills in the congregational work.<br><u>Closing worship</u> |

The team will determine the times for these various elements of a team meeting dependent on the amount of time allocated for the meeting. It is expected that the leadership is shared for these gatherings. Each member of the team can take turns for the various tasks that need to be done, including the worship, facilitating the meeting, preparing any learning, refreshments, etc. There will usually be readings and/or practice that will happen in the time between team gatherings.

The Readings available in each session will pertain to the competency. These are suggested readings and may be done as a group or individually.

There are Suggested Activities for each objective. Most learning is enhanced by experiences with the topic, therefore, many of the activities provide experiential opportunities. These are suggested activities and if it is determined the team already demonstrates competency in a certain objective, there is no need to plan an activity. Also, if a team develops their own activity to teach a certain objective, it may be added to the chart as a suggested activity.

There will be Reflection/Journal Questions in many of the sessions. It is highly recommended participants find ways to journal on these questions. Keeping a journal is a significant way of assessing one's personal growth. The team may decide to share reflections from time to time.

A number of Resources are provided in the curriculum for each session. Individuals and the team may decide the best way to use these. Much of this will depend on the self-assessment and how much learning is needed in order to become competent in any area. It is not the intention for all resources to be used by each person. The team may view videos together with a conversation following or may choose to view videos independently and either journal on reflections or bring reflections to the next team meeting. The resources should be used as the team deems necessary or appropriate. It is highly recommended that each congregation in this process sign up for a membership in Iowa Religious Media Services (IRMS) [www.irms.org](http://www.irms.org). This service provides a great many resources for study in a library-type lending program.

Upon completion of this program it is hoped that the Ministry Development Team:

- Will have the confidence to consider themselves ministry developers for their congregation;
- Will be able to implement an ongoing process in ministry formation for all the baptized;
- Will be able to provide leadership in this ongoing process of ministry formation in the congregation;
- Will be able to discern and empower new leaders emerging from the ministry formation process;
- Will be able to recognize and empower the individual and corporate ministries given to this congregation.

## Roles

The Team is supported in a variety of ways throughout the process.

**The Bishop** maintains regular contact with the Team, the Vestry and the mentor of the team, providing the oversight and vision for the team.

**The Commission on Ministry (COM)** travels with the team through the process, assigns a contact person who reports at all COM meetings, and meets at regular intervals with the team.

**A Mentor** acts as a coach and resource for the team, meets regularly with the team and builds the relationship with the team that helps connect the team and the congregation with the wider diocesan family. The mentor will focus on how the team, as a team, is developing throughout the process.

**The Ministry Developer** in the diocese oversees the process of all the teams and acts as a resource when needed.

**The Diocese of Iowa** includes the team and congregation in its prayers and provides opportunities for Collaborative Leadership Teams to gather regularly in order to strengthen their relationships with each other.

**The Vestry** of the team's congregation maintains regular contact with the team as it moves through the curriculum. The team reports regularly to the Vestry on its progress and its meetings with the Commission on Ministry and the Bishop.

**The Congregation** The team is constantly working in the congregation and shares its knowledge and skills often with the entire congregation or parts of it.

## Evaluation

The team will regularly assess its work as a team and its progress through the activities. Each activity/learning experience should be reviewed for its accomplishments and intended results. The team may find it helpful to create a portfolio containing activities and reflections on how the work contributed to the growth of competencies. It is part of the mentor's job to constantly assess the progress of the team and keep the bishop and COM informed. The team's liaison with the COM also provides updates to the COM. The team meets periodically with the COM throughout the process. It is the role of the COM to provide general guidance and direction as well as adherence to *The Constitution and Canons of The Episcopal Church*.

## Specific Ministries, including Ordained and Licensed

Discernment is an ongoing process for all of us, and especially for the members of the team. The team is formed through a nomination process with the entire congregation. Individual callings of team members to specific ministries including ordained and licensed will occur as the team progresses through the formation process. The team may also begin to identify people in the congregation (team members or others in the congregation) for specific ministries, including ordained and/or licensed. If the people identified are part of the Collaborative Leadership Team, they continue their work with the team. The Commission on Ministry (COM) engages the members of the team as a whole throughout the process. If the person is not part of the Collaborative Leadership Team he/she may join the team, or he/she may proceed in his/her discernment through the process outlined by the Commission on Ministry and *The Constitution*

*and Canons of The Episcopal Church.* The Diocese of Iowa has developed a discernment process handbook, available from the Commission on Ministry and online, that may be helpful. The Diocese adheres to the physical and psychological requirements for ordination and licensing outlined in *The Constitution and Canons of The Episcopal Church.* A team's mentor will be helpful in the work of discernment.

## Upon Completion

Upon completion of the formal process called, "The Iowa Curriculum" and approval by The Diocese of Iowa through the Commission on Ministry, Standing Committee and the Bishop, teams will be commissioned to serve as Ministry Developers in their Congregation. Any people identified and educated as ordained ministers and approved by the COM, Standing Committee and the Bishop will be ordained to their order to serve as ordained members of the team. Those members identified for licensing and approved by their mentor and Bishop will be licensed by The Diocese of Iowa to serve as licensed members of the team in their particular area of licensing.

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