

Moving toward followup from the Total Ministry survey results

The vision from the survey report includes:

- a network of mentors and those skilled in formation
- flexible formation opportunities for both baptismal and ordained ministry
- ongoing conversion to a culture of baptismal ministry throughout the diocese
- a diocesan culture of experimentation and flexibility
- an understanding that the mission of the church is often outside the walls of the church

Baptismal ministry and leadership is strengthened through faith formation and leadership formation: these are two sides of one coin. What we have seen in the best of the Total Ministry congregations is that the community of trust that was built during the formation of the ministry team has led to the change in mindset that allows the congregation to become a ministering community, working together to be the body of Christ in the broader community. The vision is to bring the opportunity of that mindset change to congregations without necessitating the designation “Total Ministry” through intentional work of ongoing conversion to baptismal ministry at the congregational level.

We can use existing resources and diocesan structures to create the network of mentors and those skilled in formation. We could build on the foundation that has already been laid through the College for Congregational Development and the Consultant’s Network, and add to it those skilled in faith formation and those with experience of Total Ministry and ministry teams (Perhaps a name change to Ministry Network?). This network could offer formation opportunities and consultations of various kinds, including:

- Congregational development work
- Ministry team formation and development (Ministry Teams no longer being limited to congregations that are designated “Total Ministry,” but instead seen as a tool for expanding the ministry of any congregation)
- Faith formation to be undertaken by a congregation or a group within the congregation
- Formation leading to licensing for various lay ministries and continuing education (the Commission on Ministry would continue to oversee the licensing requirements)

Continuing development of our diocesan culture in the directions of baptismal ministry and experimentation and flexibility are ongoing through the work of the College for Congregational Development and would be supported through this proposed Ministry Network.

This vision incorporates the following further changes:

- Congregations are no longer formally designated “Total Ministry,” they are churches like any other church
- Ministry teams are understood to be one effective way that baptismal ministry can be carried out in a congregation, but are not required for congregations of any size
- Standards of formation for ordination are consistent for every person regardless of their stated intentions about where they intend to serve: traditional seminary as well as alternative paths (created by the Formation Committee of the COM) are both expected to form clergy for the whole church

The Total Ministry Development Group should be celebrated and allowed to hand off its work: its members should be invited to continue their important ministries, offering their valuable experience and knowledge, on other diocesan bodies as appropriate to continue the rollout and support of baptismal ministry throughout the diocese (for example, on the Commission on Ministry, on the Ministry Network, or on the Congregational Development Group).

Important steps:

The Commission on Ministry must create standardized requirements for ordination to the diaconate and the priesthood that apply to all ordinands.

The Board of Trustees and Bishop must create an understanding or policy regarding canonical authority and compensation to address the question: can a non-stipendiary priest be a Priest in Charge of a congregation?