

Diocesan Fellowship Working Group Report to the Bishop – 2025

The Diocesan Fellowship Working Group was created as a result of an in-person Diocesan Leadership/Mutual Ministry Review meeting held at Christ Church, North Hills in the fall of 2024. The Diocesan Communications and Growth Working Groups were launched at the same time. These working groups share a mutual goal of addressing those three priority initiatives put forward by Bishop Ketlen Solack at the 2023 Diocesan Convention.

The Diocesan Fellowship Committee began meeting in early 2025 after an outreach published in Grace Happens resulted in 8 interested lay and clergy volunteers who set to work in the early spring of 2025. The group meet via Zoom several times to define what ‘fellowship’ meant in our context, brainstorm ideas for increasing fellowship, as we defined it, chose several to develop further and choose which to launch first.

Among many suggestions, the key ideas considered included:

- Diocesan Wide Week Long Revival
- Inter-Parish Bible Studies/Online directory of virtual offerings
- Continuation of the Holy Hikes initiative from the prior year
- Diocesan Passport
- LEM/Pulpit ‘Swapping’
- Vacation Bible Studies

To make best use of limited resources and time to implement, the working group decided to focus on:

- support for on-going fellowship activities (Holy Hikes)
- Diocesan Directory of Virtual Offerings
- Diocesan Passport

We quickly learned the Holy Hikes were indeed continuing and needed no further support from our working group to grow.

Anthony Crisafio took on the task of contacting parishes to collect information about their scheduled virtual offerings (e.g. bible study groups) that could be posted to the Diocesan Website and maintained by the parishes with support from Andy Muhl. The information has been collected and Anthony continues to work with Andy to make this a reality.

Kathy Baird shared her experience with the Diocesan Passport concept in an area of Ontario, Canada where churches were small and spread out and grouped under shared clergy operation. They created a ‘passport’ that parishioners used when they traveled to attend services at churches other than their home church. Father Brandon took that concept and developed the version that was announced this summer in Grace Happens and it is having some success. We hope that posting pictures in Grace Happens of parishioners using them and welcoming visitors will continue to grow as members of our diocese make new friends across the diocese and share in the unique traditions that each parish has.

Going forward, we plan to continue implementation and support of existing initiatives so they can become self-sustaining diocesan initiatives and take on brand new ones and/or flesh out ones we have already identified.

I want to personally recognize the contributions and perseverance of each of the working group members and especially to Anthony when he kept up the group's momentum when my plate became too full.

Yours in faith,

Kathy Baird (Chair)

The Rev. Brandon Cooper

Anthony Crisafio (Vice Chair)

The Rev. Arthur C. Dilg

Wilma Gaughan

The Rev. Carol Henley

Jane Parkhurst

The Rev. Canon Joann Saylor