

Congregational Mentorship and Vocational Discernment:  
A Case Study of 18 – 35 year old Anglicans in the Diocese of Jamaica and the Cayman  
Islands

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## ABSTRACT

Charles E. Foster has noted that “the adaptive challenge for [traditional] congregations in creating catechetical cultures capable of forming faith in their children requires a lively and ecclesiastically grounded educational imagination.” There is a sense in which this assertion is reflected in the [2012] challenge, issued to the diocese of Jamaica and the Cayman Islands by its Lord Bishop, to engage a process of re-visioning, and thereby, affirm a ‘joyful, energetic discipleship,’ distinctly different from what he referred to as “paradigms of protection, survival and maintenance.” This project thesis seeks to highlight Congregational Mentorship as a way of engaging the discipleship, implied in the statements of both Foster and the Bishop. The hypothesis is predicated on the assumption that when a process of mentorship, anchored in the theology of baptism, and targeting the cohorts of 18 – 35 year olds (missing from many Anglican congregations) is engaged, a likely outcome would be greater appreciation for their unique role in actualizing the diocesan visionary objective. It further anticipates that as [potential] mentors are facilitated towards a mature understanding of their faith, they will become more amenable to the kind of committed leadership that is able to stem the current membership decline. Elements of the thesis viz. the concept of joyful, energetic discipleship; dynamics of congregational mentorship; assumptions of other theological and social science practitioners and a discernment processes, have been woven into one cohesive unit, with findings analyzed and recommendations for diocesan implementation made. Testing the project with a sample group, has given credence to the assumption that focused mentoring facilitates vocational discernment and aids in bridging membership gaps within in traditional [Anglican] congregations – the diocese of Jamaica and Cayman Islands being a case in point.

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INTRODUCTION  
“In Search of a New Normal”

*The Descriptive-Empirical Task of Delineating the Concept ‘joyful energetic  
discipleship’ Outlined in the Diocesan Vision.*

The Background:

Commenting on the relationship between a faith by which to live and participation in a community that nurtures and supports it, John H. Westerhoff III (2000) makes mention of a number of significant factors that impact the choices involved in such a relationship. In doing so, he highlights several entities that could be considered influential, viz. they are able to give shape to one’s faith perspective, particularly within a context that is nurturing, supportive and exemplifies the spirit of Community. Interestingly, while Westerhoff affirms the need for individual freedom in the choices and decisions toward that which eventually assumes prominence in faith formation and ownership, he argues somewhat paradoxically, that it is only in choosing to be influenced by God, that an individual begins to experience what it means to be truly free.<sup>1</sup>

There is a somewhat veiled yet unmistakable stridency to the tone of Westerhoff’s affirmation which, if taken without due reference to context, could be mistakenly interpreted as cynicism. Extolling as he does, the virtues of intentional methods of engagement toward and with those being formed by a supporting and supportive Community e.g. the Church, Westerhoff compares context-specific and tailor-made interventions with the more broad-brushed, generic and largely unsubstantiated approaches and expectations that, while tending to be the norm in many instances and

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<sup>1</sup> Will Our Children Have Faith pg. 47

situations, do very little to truly engage and/or facilitate those seeking clarity in liberating and hence life changing ways. Put another way, in the course of its ongoing ministry of discipleship, the Church ought, as a matter of course, to grapple with the perennial challenge[s] of being constantly engaged in what could be described as a delicate balancing act – that of enabling and facilitating the personal and spiritual growth and development of its members across several generations, even as it nurtures and maintains a visible, vibrant and viable Community. In short, there is simply no engaging the one without the other for, in an environment presumed to be nurturing and supportive i.e. both sustaining and enriching life, a holistic approach to such maturity and development, can never be presumed as being optional.

#### A Call for Renewal:

At the One Hundred and Forty Second regional *pre-synod conferences* of the Diocese of Jamaica and Cayman Islands, held in April of 2012, a telling and thought stimulating power-point presentation,<sup>2</sup> authored by Diocesan Bishop the Rt. Revd. Dr. Howard Gregory was offered to the gathering of delegates, with objectives that could be summarized in a two word phrase namely: *Diocesan Renewal*. There was little doubt, from the contents of the presentation, that the rationale for the *vision* being articulated, was informed and fuelled in large part by unmistakable and glaring signs of non-growth, evidenced by an insidious decline in church membership that, though not totally unexpected, still carried an element of surprise, with respect to its magnitude.

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<sup>2</sup>Gregory, Howard K.: *Framework for a Strategic Vision*; Diocese of Jamaica and Cayman Islands

Among some of the examples cited as evidence of the realities described in the presentation and hence the need and related call for renewal, were three separate yet interlinked observations, supported by empirical data, with direct relationship to and bearing upon the rationale behind this Project Thesis. The observations in question, highlighted a situation that, though seemingly dire, held possibilities for redemption and consequently, pointed toward (in a manner that presumes focused and intentional advocacy) the need for paradigm shifts with concomitant *modus operandi*, that would have the effect of cauterizing hemorrhaging ecclesial wounds, and thereby preventing further deterioration and what would most certainly be a slow and painful death.

The framework outlined, cogently articulated the realities of a Church [*Diocese of Jamaica and Cayman Islands*] in a state of decline, even as it proposed mandatory requirements for transformation that would be inextricably linked to processes of re-visioning and ultimately, renewal. Additionally, it singled out and highlighted certain attitudes and behaviors that would have to be permanently discarded if the hoped for transformation is to be achieved. Several of those highlighted attitudes and behaviors it further asserted, were consistent with the traditional Anglican penchant for non-disruptive methods of operation, particularly in times and situations requiring new and radical interventions, that are decidedly different from the usual courses of action that favor zones of comfort and safety, whilst continuing to *talk*, around the subject of transformation.

Armed with such a backdrop therefore, against which his call for renewal was anchored, the Bishop proposed a strategy, that in highlighting the urgency of the moment, grounded the desire and hope for a mission driven Diocese, within a context that is consistent with

the objectives and spirit of the *Five Marks of Mission*<sup>3</sup> adopted by The Worldwide Anglican Church and regarded as a benchmark for missionary engagement and activity throughout the Anglican World. In arguing thus, the Bishop endorsed these guidelines as the essential starting point and goal of his call for Diocesan renewal and transformation.

During the course of his presentations, the Bishop employed what I would describe as *hyperbolic analogy* [i.e. *over-stating of a problem-situation, relative to that considered normal and desirable, with the objective of inciting shock and outrage*], to strengthen his call for change. He painted a vivid picture of the prevailing socio-cultural and religious climate in Jamaica, buttressed as it were, by the unmistakably negative influences of what he further described as *paradigms of protection, survival and maintenance*.<sup>4</sup>

In bolstering the call for a new missiological methodology, to counter that which currently existed viz. a modus operandi aimed at clarifying and strengthening the call for transformation, comparisons were drawn between systems geared towards maintenance of the *status quo* and those advocating methods of discipleship and mission, consistent with the Christian *Gospel* narrative. It is the latter's authenticity and relevance, both theologically and socially he implied, that offers *prima facie* evidence as it were, for garnering across the board Diocesan support for changes that would, in reality, be more than cosmetic. To be sure, the changes being advocated would require, even demand the paradigmatic shifts referred to earlier and heralded a new way of being for and within the Diocese. The objective[s] anticipated in the vision's actualization, therefore, was/were beautifully captured in the *joyful, energetic discipleship* concept and metaphor that would

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/mission/marks-of-mission.aspx>

<sup>4</sup> Gregory, Howard K: Framework for A Strategic Vision – Diocese of Jamaica and Cayman Islands



become the primary focus of a new and improved Diocesan missionary operative, even as it informed the narrative that would become the means by which its out-workings would be both described and conveyed.

The framework outlined, also highlighted challenges that raised pertinent questions surrounding issues broadly related to dwindling membership but more precisely, the diminishing presence and participation of youth and young adults. Implicit in all this, were as yet un-vocalized questions concerning the operations of a number of Diocesan departments and divisions. Many of those who fall within the problem groups identified above, were found to be consistently *voting with their feet*, bearing testimony to the view that the Church was not only in a state of flux but that the perceived absence of a clear discipleship strategy, aimed at stemming the tide of the exodus, could arguably be interpreted as courting possibilities of a Church, out of touch with reality and to all intents and purposes, becoming irrelevant.

That there is in fact a large and growing number among younger generations of its members, whose [literal and figurative] absence from the Church's pews, signals the beginnings of a dismal future with respect to continuity and succession, begs further unpacking and explanation of the vision as a whole and in particular, those component parts which clearly understood, have the ability to strengthen its overall outlook and reach. There was a perceived need then, for a detailed explanation of the concept and objective[s] inherent in the anticipated *joyful, energetic discipleship* that would in essence, include guidelines and methods of engagement to be agreed upon, in order to ensure achievement of the vision, in both the short and long terms.

### Unpacking the Concept:

As a consequence of the Bishop's presentation, my own closer perusal and assessment of a number of extant reports and surveys, revealed data that corroborated his and other previously made claims which attempted to raise the issue of the Church's less than favorable current and hence future image. To be sure, there were some localized attempts spearheaded by individual parishes, to implement a variety of interventions and programs with the objective of generating reforms. These, however, were introduced on a more or less ad hoc basis, ostensibly in response to the increasing disconnect between the institutional Church and its various constituents. Being devoid of an imaginative and properly crafted methodology however, they did not gain much traction. Valiant attempts though they were, the absence of a comprehensive, all-encompassing Diocesan plan of action, to address the problem[s] and related challenges, highlighted another story. Conclusions drawn implied a certain malaise and perceived lack of will to pursue a generative process that would produce at the very minimum, a blueprint outlining the path towards the desired change[s].

If then, throughout the Diocese, the desire and quest for a *New Normal*, rooted in and consequently identified by, among other characteristics, *joyful, energetic, discipleship* was to become operational, a clear and concise definition of the concept would have to be delineated. The objective of engaging such a process would then be towards facilitating clarity in apprehending changes in missiological understanding and related praxis, consistent with the vision being articulated. What then was to be understood by this concept and how was such understanding [directly or indirectly] related to the vision being espoused?

While the *joyful, energetic, discipleship* concept was presented as an imperative of the Diocesan vision, there has to date been no observable effort to define its constituent parts and thereby, provide a clear picture of the type of missionary operative and by extension, the Church it was seeking to and would ultimately describe. That which follows in the next two chapters, therefore, will be an attempt to define the concept and in so doing, advance the hypothesis that it is to all intents and purposes, the axis or fulcrum upon which ease of movement from the present state of flux towards the hoped for transformation and renewal, will be achieved. Additionally, it is envisaged that from this clarified perspective, a proposal for the identification and training of lay leaders, who will become facilitators of faith ownership and vocational discernment, particularly among youth and young adults, pursuant to Diocesan transformation, would be made.

Taken on its own, the concept reads like a dream, the fulfillment of which has little if any bearing on a current reality but rather, everything to do with a future and hoped for existence. Understood contextually however, with reference to other aspects of the vision and set against the background of prevailing socio-cultural and religious entities, and with due regard to the dictates of Practical Theology, there is every reason to affirm possibilities of now i.e. a present reality, in tandem with implications for the future, as an advisable and preferred course of action. Viewed holistically, the Diocesan Vision Statement [first created in 2011 and modified in 2014] highlighted hereunder, provides clues to the meaning, nature and quality of the Church's mission and by extension, the discipleship methods it intends to both embrace and pursue.

Vision Statement:

*The Diocese of Jamaica and The Cayman Islands, inspired by the Holy Spirit and through the joyful and energetic discipleship of its members at all levels and of all ages, commits itself to being an assertive influence for good on society; and to locate, engage and serve the wider society wherever they are, through individual mission and ministry, in faith, hope and charity; and to inspire and enlist recruits in active discipleship as members of the body of Christ and new members/stakeholders of a growing and dynamic Diocese<sup>5</sup>*

There can be little doubt that implicit in the words of this Vision Statement, is an understanding of the Church as *agent of change and transformation*, wherever it is planted and allowed to flourish. The Church therefore, cannot be projected as an inert organization but rather, as an active organism, equipped for and hence tasked with the role of making a needed positive difference in the world. On closer examination also, the Statement anticipates a high and infectious level of spiritual energy that cuts across generational lines, even as it tackles issues, pertaining to prevailing socio-cultural and economic realities outlined by the Bishop and referred to earlier in this work. The question then becomes: how does a Diocese facilitate among its current membership that which it hopes will become characteristic of its existence? In other words, can it enact policies and strategies, with the kind of appeal that is able like a magnet, to pull others to it, particularly those from missing age cohorts? In responding to these questions, it will be necessary to analyze whether or not a lack of courage to wholeheartedly embrace new

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<sup>5</sup> Vision Statement – Diocese of Jamaica and Cayman Islands

and improved ways of engaging its mission, particularly via the ministry of discipleship, is evident.

To be sure, engaging such a process is guaranteed to have inevitable challenges and in some respects unavoidable pains. These, however, may be necessary for strengthening the *body* – preparing it for the greater, [sacramental] service by which, in increasing measure, it can become a visible, tangible sign of God’s presence amidst a confused and confusing world. *Joyful, energetic discipleship* therefore, speaks to faith transmission that is the result of a lived theology in which mind and senses are fully engaged; it is a theology by which vertical and horizontal experiences of God’s unconditional love, fuels even as it drives wholesome, self-actualizing ways of being. To put it another way, the concept describes a Church that is identified by a *theological joie de vivre*, one that is informed yet not hamstrung by its history and traditions. It speaks to animated, exuberant followership, directly proportionate to inspired leadership, both of which are aimed at enabling the *Imago Dei* at the core of human existence, to be fully realized by and reflected in every member, irrespective of their age.

Given such an outlook, it is nigh unto impossible for the Church to truly and successfully engage its missionary mandate by means of time-bound rhetoric that is incapable of making the link between (non)actions in the present and their (adverse) repercussions in the future. The fact remains then that continuing in such a vein, is in many respects, tantamount to issuing a decree signaling the Church’s impending demise, since there would hardly be anyone left with/among whom to exercise ministry.

### Engaging the Data:

In support of the claims made above, extant reports bulleted hereunder, provided pertinent data. A trend was revealed that was in several ways troubling and begged questions with specific reference to the need for and importance of intervention methods and strategies aimed at remedying the problems described. The ensuing list identifies the type of and period covered by each report:

- Diocesan Ecclesiastical Reports (2011 – 2016)
- The National Population and Housing Survey (2011)
- Preliminary Report on the Anglican Church in Jamaica (2012)
- The Framework for a Strategic Diocesan Vision (2014)

Resulting from analysis of the data presented in the listed documents, a decision was taken with regard to this *Project Thesis*, to develop and engage an intervention process – targeting a sample group, representing persons in the age categories referred to as youth and young adults who could potentially impact the Diocese’s discipleship programs and consequently, facilitate a significant movement towards achievement of the Diocesan vision. It is anticipated, therefore, that the process being proposed, will place the spotlight as it were, on that section of the Church’s membership deemed to be most vulnerable yet arguably, possessing significant resources with possibilities for, among others, positively impacting the vision’s outcome and ultimately, the future of the Diocese.

Information gleaned from the highlighted reports, pin-pointed the problem as stated i.e. declining Church membership and lack of sustained and committed participation among

younger generations. The data revealed problems to be dealt with not only in the sense of identifying them but also articulating the need for introduction of a generative process with an overarching objective of addressing specific problems and issues and thereby, identifying real and practical solutions. It may be argued then, that a further objective would be that of establishing a pathway, towards the discipleship goals.

#### Situational Analysis:

Based on information gleaned from the highlighted reports and surveys as well as that referenced in relation to the Bishop's presentation, a number of problems and challenges were identified. Chief among these are:

- decreasing membership
- ageing congregations
- dwindling finances
- increasing numbers of insolvent cures and congregations
- dearth of vocations to the full-time ordained ministry
- decreasing numbers of youth and young adults

The data on membership represented in *Figure 1* below, present concerning trends, with implications for the Diocese's continued viability and influence in both the short and long term.



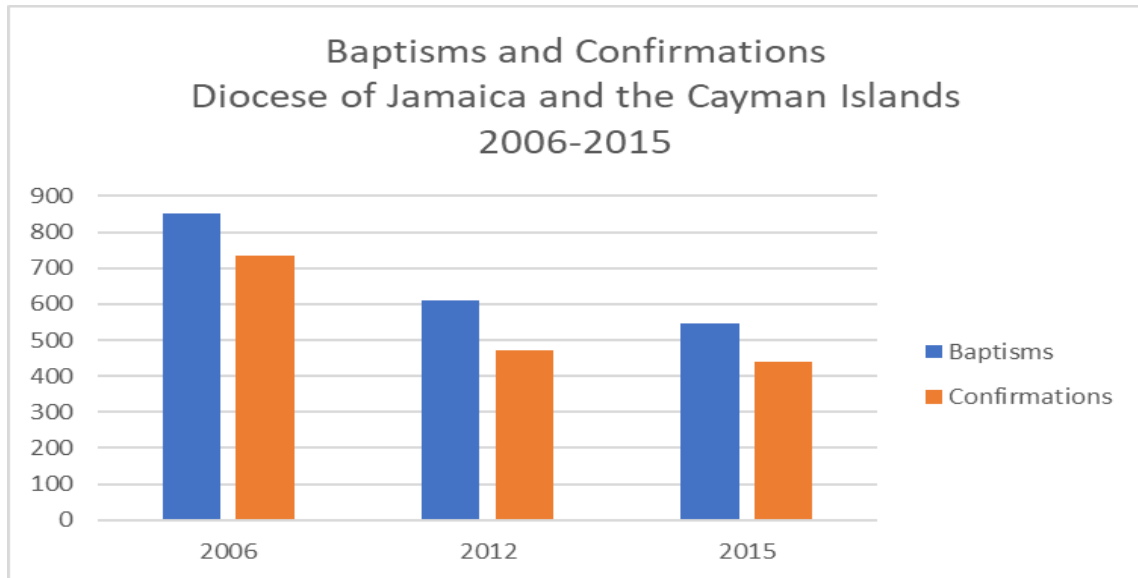
*Figure 1*

From information gathered via Diocesan Ecclesiastical Reports<sup>6</sup>, the total number of registered Anglican members declined by approximately 31% over the period 2001 to 2015 (*Fig.1*). This decline may be attributed not only to the fact of members switching denominational affiliation but also to significant fall offs in new membership, reflected in the data on *baptism* and *confirmation* trends respectively (29% and 36% ) over the period 2006-2015 (*Figure 2*)

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<sup>6</sup> Diocese of Jamaica and Cayman Islands: Ecclesiastical Reports 2001 – 2015





*Figure 2*

These trends are also reflected in the findings and figures of the Population Census (2011) of the island of Jamaica<sup>7</sup> which underscores the decline in Anglican membership over the last six (6) decades and highlights some of the significant demographic shifts and changes that have without doubt contributed to the Church's overall membership decline and pointed to its continued failure to connect with the large and increasing number of *millennials* in the general population.

Worthy of note also, is the fact that the data from the Census indicated the presence of an ageing Church population along with significant examples of urbanization and major population shifts, especially in rural areas. While population shifts have been a feature of life in Jamaica over the last sixty plus (60+) years, it appears that the Church's response in previous years was significantly more positive than in these latter ones. Evidence of this more positive and to a certain extent proactive action is observed in the establishment

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<sup>7</sup> Island of Jamaica: Population and Housing Census Report

of a number of new congregations, in response to population growth and residential development, particularly in the metropolitan areas.

Additionally, the Census highlights a significant fall off in membership among the youth and persons falling within working-age cohorts. Concomitantly, while the data presented shows significant increases in the membership of a number of other (both mainline and non-traditional) denominations, it also highlights the fact of an increasing number of persons, approximately 570,000 or close to 22.8 % of the population, reporting no religious affiliation. The reality of increasing numbers within this latter group seems to suggest clear opportunities for the larger Christian community – and for reasons germane to this project thesis – the Anglican Diocese, to develop strategic approaches to mission and the exercise of related ministries. There is without doubt a burning need for more than merely acknowledging cognizance of this section of the population, in a way that challenges preconceived notions regarding the religiously unaffiliated. Such cognizance would take into account the fluid nature<sup>8</sup> of religious identity, as well as the need for a revised discipleship methodology within the mandate of the Great Commission. In his analysis of the situation, the Bishop summarized challenge[s] that would face the Diocese, as a result of its intention[s] to deal therewith, in the following way:

*“The old ‘franchise’ system in which most of the faithful were loyal to a particular brand of Christianity has almost faded away. Few congregations can get away with sustaining themselves by their denominational identity alone. The old system of baptizing, confirming, marrying, and then beginning this process again cannot be guaranteed and*

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<sup>8</sup> Island of Jamaica: Population and Housing Census Report

*will require congregations to reach out to people who have not attended Anglican churches or may have never attended church at all”<sup>9</sup>*

The Bishop’s analysis concurs with the opinions of pastor, theologian and blogger, Karl Vaters, posted in an article appearing in a 2017 edition of the journal – Christianity Today.<sup>10</sup> In what could be described as a no holds barred commentary, Vaters outlined what he felt were the real reasons behind what he has come to believe is and therefore confidently describes as ‘*The Death of Brand Loyalty*’ in relation to declining Church membership, especially within traditional denominations. Vaters suggests that the glory days of remaining an affiliate or part of one’s denomination and/or congregation, out of sheer loyalty or even duty, in an age of multiple options, is neither en vogue nor healthy. In fact, he implies that because such loyalty is often associated with the largely *un-critical* members who subscribe to the almost infallible office and position of the priest/pastor/leader, a kind of marginalization ensues that thrives on hyper-denominationalism and maintenance of the status quo which holds to a view of knowledge and power being resident only within a small minority and that the end result is often in keeping with the notion that the greater majority, is usually left – to borrow words from the Syro-Phoenician woman in responding to Jesus’ reaction to her – “*gather the crumbs which fall from the master’s table*”<sup>11</sup>.

That for current and emerging generations such loyalty is not only foreign to their ways of being, but is in actual fact being verbally challenged and in some respects stridently

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<sup>9</sup> Gregory, Howard K: Framework for a Strategic Vision – Diocese of Jamaica and Cayman Islands

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.christianitytoday.com/karl-vaters/2017/february/loyal-church-denomination-anymore-good.html>

<sup>11</sup> Mark 7:28 NRSV

rejected as a tool of oppression, has created for the Church, what Vaters aptly describes as a “*Real-Life Parable*.”<sup>12</sup> In other words, what both the Bishop and Vaters are alluding to, albeit arguing from different socio cultural perspectives, hinges on the presumption that context occupies a significant portion of the rationale for articulating a theology and determining the related methodology that undergirds the search for that which gives meaning and purpose to life. The quest for a *New Normal* in the Diocese of Jamaica and the Cayman Islands therefore, is itself parabolic, given the fact that the Church’s leaders are forced as it were, to listen to, hear and interpret the voices of not only its members but also those within the surrounding communities and culture[s]. As a consequence, the Church can no longer offer *generic, one size fits all* responses to the [ultimate] questions, being posed by those to and among whom it ministers. The ever evolving times seem to point towards one particular direction; they highlight the fact that while the message of the Gospel is an unchanging one, the means by which it is transmitted must be constantly [re]evaluated so that its potency is never minimized, and is experienced and embraced by succeeding generations. It is the ability to listen, hear and respond then, as fellow learners and pilgrims along life’s evolving journey that will, in the long run, create space for the emergence of a Church, personifying the image affirmed by Jesus in Luke 4: 18 – 19, viz. a Church that enables and facilitates the liberation of all peoples, by providing for their nourishment and nurture and in that vein, enable and facilitate actualization God-given potentialities.

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.christianitytoday.com/karl-vaters/2017/february/loyal-church-denomination-anymore-good.html>

As a consequence of the foregoing, a challenge has been issued to the Church, with respect to developing new and modified approaches to its mission and ministry; such approaches should be capable of supporting, encouraging and equipping existing members not merely by means of a maintenance methodology with the objective of keeping them loyal, but by enabling them to positively respond to the vocation to be *Christ-centered* and *Christ-focused*, with all that these designations connote, that is enshrined in their baptismal covenant. It is in this regard therefore, in this quest for *a new normal*, that this Project Thesis will outline and examine possibilities that inhere in the creation of a cadre of church leaders: young men and women, for whom the various ministries they engage and the evolving nature of vocation, ought to be grounded in a firm understanding of the Church's Theology of Baptism. A thorough unpacking and hopefully greater understanding and embrace of this theology will hopefully aid this group in the process of discerning and clarifying the unique vocation of co-creators and co-workers with God in enabling others, particularly those of similar age groups, desiring to also discern and embrace that which is able to aid their transition from questioning to owning the faith.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Westerhoff, John: Will Our children Have Faith

## CHAPTER I “Mind the Gap”

*Congregational Mentoring: Bridging the Gap of decreasing 18 – 35 year old Members in the Diocese of Jamaica and Cayman Islands.*

### The Inadequacy of Reliance on Loyalty:

In the introductory chapter, brief mention was made of the conclusion, drawn by Karl Vaters (2017),<sup>14</sup> with reference to what he had determined was the “*death of Brand Loyalty*” in relation to the troublingly conspicuous absence of millennials from traditional churches. The substance of his arguments, hinging as they do on the visible, noncommittal nature of the relationship between traditional [Anglican] churches and younger generations, serves as an important point of departure, for the continuing discussion herein, on the problem of declining membership and participation among youth and young adults, in the Diocese of Jamaica and the Cayman Islands.

The spirituality identified in younger generations, characterized in large part by an unmistakable fluidity<sup>15</sup> and linked to the search for religious identity, provides a peek as it were, into the presumed reasons behind the quest for solutions to the problem of their absence from traditional [Anglican] congregations, which is a focal point of this project thesis. Put another way, the reality and acknowledgement of shifting paradigms in the search for religious identity among younger generations, highlight the fact that whereas

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<sup>14</sup> <https://www.christianitytoday.com/karl-vaters/2017/february/loyal-church-denomination-anymore-good.html>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.christianitytoday.com/karl-vaters/2017/february/loyal-church-denomination-anymore-good.html>

parents and grandparents remained members of a particular denomination [even in the face of disappointments in relation to unmet needs], predominantly out of a sense of duty, younger generations neither adhere to nor display such loyalty. They have arguably affirmed, by precept and practice, the link between loyalty and satisfaction as being something of a euphoric state that is as current as it is futuristic. In this regard, there is no holding on to practices or remaining within groups that fail to satisfy needs and desires, believed to be germane to their sense of wellbeing. Loyalty for its own sake, therefore, particularly of the kind appended to church membership, and cannot readily be substantiated, has to all intents and purposes, been rendered obsolete.

Given the multiplicity and variety of options currently on offer in the areas of religious belief and theological understanding, there is a sense in which the globalized world of technology provide today's youth and young adults with opportunities to select [very much like a consumer] that which they believe to be of import in meeting their individual needs and aspirations. Where these needs go un-met therefore, there is little if any motivation as it were, to *stick around*. To quote Vaters:

*“When we hold to the false notion that people should want to do church the way we do it, we fail to offer them a better, more valuable church experience.”<sup>16</sup>*

Declining numbers among the youth/young adult population, therefore, stands as something of a *testimony*, to the Church's [continued] failure and debatable refusal to recognize and positively respond to questions and needs that are germane to [younger and would-be] members' wellbeing. It is, once again and subject to debate, that this kind of

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<sup>16</sup> <https://www.christianitytoday.com/karl-vaters/2017/february/loyal-church-denomination-anymore-good.html>

non-response could in a real sense, be described as *suicidal*. The lack of a positive response then creates a widening of the relationship gap between and among members of the different generations in the community and, left untreated, creates a veritable chasm, that at best is difficult or worse, impossible to bridge.

Just a cursory look at the conclusion drawn by Vaters coupled with the background data that informs it, highlights the fact that when a Church community continues to rely solely on its history, heritage and traditions, to the disregard [even unintended] of the reality of and hence need for change, both its missiology and the outworking thereof, will be flawed. Any influence it might have had or would seek to exert on the very ones it intends to disciple will begin to lessen and ultimately dissipate. What the Jamaican diocese has been experiencing, therefore, borne out by the numbers referenced at *Figure 2*<sup>17</sup>, is a significant fall off in its membership and evidenced in its waning influence upon the generations from which it anticipates will come, in the medium to long term, the Church's future leaders.

Although the challenges being highlighted are mirrored to greater or lesser degrees within other [traditional] denominations, the fact remains for the Anglican Church, that its vitality, visibility and viability rest by and large on the ability to evaluate its missionary strategies contextually, via the lens of the Great Commission. When that is done, the Church will hopefully, be in a better position to affirm the praxis of a theology of leadership that is at heart transformational and as a consequence, capable of exerting the positive moral, educational and social impact, for which it was known in a bygone era.

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<sup>17</sup> Diocesan Ecclesiastical Reports 2001 - 2015



In his rather insightful work *From Generation to Generation*<sup>18</sup> Charles Foster (2012) opines that for the objective of faith formation in younger generations to be met, catechetical cultures that are ‘*lively, ecclesiastically grounded and educationally imaginative*’ ought to be created. In other words, if the Diocesan vision of “*joyful, energetic discipleship*” is to be embraced as more than a futuristic ideal, *sustained* application of Christian Education and Formation principles complete with methods of engagement, informed by the realities of the cultures within which current and anticipated members live, move and have being, must become a significant part of its missiological *raison d’etre*. In the final analysis therefore, Church involvement cannot be predicated solely upon loyalty to a set of beliefs and practices or viewed through the narrow lenses of traditionalism; to do so would in effect make such involvement an end in itself. The challenge remains, therefore, to look beyond involvement, to the ultimate source of the Church’s being and energy – that which sustains congregational life and individual members thereof. This challenge speaks to even as it demands an intentional look at the characteristics and psychological makeup of those, whose attention the Church would seek to [re]capture viz. a viz. new and modified methods of engagement.

Minding “The Gaps”:

Anyone, having experienced travel on the British underground [tube], will immediately recognize the clarion call... “*Mind the Gap!*” This is the precautionary warning that draws the commuting public’s attention to the space or *gap* that exists between train and platform. To “*Mind the Gap*” is to be cautiously aware; it assumes a level of intentionality in observing one’s movements and the fact that those movements require

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<sup>18</sup> Pg. 27 From Generation to Generation

careful attention and consciousness, placing a high premium on the safety of the individual traveler and by extension the entire system that regulates travelling.

*“Mind the gap”* enjoins focus and precision with respect to movement, particularly because of the seemingly harmless nature and uncertainty surrounding that which the gap represents. Failure therefore, to heed the warning to carefully observe and so take cognizance in one’s movements of the reality of gaps, can have far reaching and potentially fatal consequences. The clarity and consistency of the warning, conveyed by these three words and transmitted via public address systems throughout underground [tube] stations therefore, is without doubt aimed at capturing attention and heightening the awareness of the travelling public, regarding the stark realities of the *gap*: which stands between safety and the possibility of harm.

There is a sense in which the clarion call in the admonition to *“Mind the Gap,”* can be applied analogically to the challenge being experienced in the Diocese of Jamaica and Cayman Islands and by extension the Anglican world, with respect to existing *“gaps”* in its membership complement, relationship with and impact on the surrounding culture[s]. *“Gaps”* in this regard, are not only symbolic of the widening chasm created by missing age cohorts among the different generations found in local Anglican congregations; they also symbolize gaping deficiencies in the methods and approaches employed in ensuring consistency and fluidity in the act of transitioning from one stage of [spiritual] understanding and development to another. *“Gaps”* may be understood as indicators that a Church is not only failing to observe the deficiencies of its *modus operandi*, but as a consequence of which, is also failing to secure a safe, enlivening and enlightening experience for those whose joyful and energetic life journey, it is seeking to facilitate.

It can be argued that the failure to recognize both the existence of and threats posed by these “*gaps*,” has contributed significantly to the unease and sense of insecurity being experienced by members and would-be members, especially in relationship to issues affecting life in general and spirituality in particular. As a consequence, those who feel vulnerable: that their [spiritual] security is either not assured or perhaps threatened, have ‘*exited the station*’, so to speak, articulating a preference as it were, for other means by which they believe their needs will be met: where their [spiritual] security is guaranteed. That the prevalence and peculiarities of “*gaps*” within the overall structure and systems of the Church has given cause for lament, suggests an insidious malady that has reached epidemic proportions and places in serious jeopardy, achievement of the objective of a ‘*preferred future*,’ highlighted in the Diocesan vision.

The presence of “*gaps*,” also raises concerns with respect to perceived deficiencies in the Church’s missionary endeavors and this with specific reference to its discipleship methodology. “*Gaps*” beg questions relative to awareness of and strategies for preventing increasing chaos, occasioned by the systematic disintegration, generated by membership decline. Additionally, they call attention to the necessity of precautionary measures, which would not be required if all concerned were made [to feel] secure and so experience the euphoria that is evident among persons whose journey of faith is as exciting as it is challenging. Furthermore, there is a real possibility, in light of the foregoing, that certain guarantees are needed with regard to the journey of faith being engaged within a setting and community that is caring, supportive and as a consequence, able to facilitate a smoother transition from one stage or level of development to another,

particularly with respect to [those] eventualities that require communal underpinning and support, rather than individual effort to surmount.

Also to be considered are the possible effects of disregarding viz. ignoring the “gaps,” precipitating the cumulative, end-point trauma and stigma associated with what has come to be regarded as an aging or *geriatric church* on the verge of extinction. It is in response to such issues, directly and indirectly related to the presence of “gaps” particularly those highlighting the absence of younger generations from mainstream activity within Diocesan structure[s] that the research carried out by John Westerhoff, remains a pivotal point of reference. Westerhoff’s work has provided the lenses through which to view and analyze factors that contribute to the widening of “gaps” in relation to youth, young adults and their presumed [non]conformity to religious creeds, ideals and ways of being. His theories concerning faith development within children and young adults have opened numerous doors – offering perspectives on possibilities for narrowing or bridging generational “gaps” and ensuring a faith journey that is engaging, enlightening and enriching, for all. In the paragraphs to follow, I will take a closer look at one such theory, as it relates to the stated problem[s] and quest for a possible solution.

#### The Bridge of Enculturation:

In a revised edition of his seminal work in which he advanced *Styles of Faith Development* in relation to the psychological development of children and adolescents, Westerhoff (2000)<sup>19</sup> offers valuable insight into the process by which children and young people learn and consequently, he suggests a methodology aimed at ensuring that such

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<sup>19</sup> Will Our Children Have Faith pg. 78

learning takes place within an environment that nurtures ability to think, reason and interact with members of their own and other generations. To this end he advances a concept, outlining a method of engagement which he names “*enculturation*”<sup>20</sup>. The objective and process being highlighted, address the possibility of concurrent, that is to say, shared learning within and across generations. The rationale for this method assumes an environment in which the experiences of those within congregations [all age groups included], being integral to their wellbeing and sense of belonging, are shared interactively.

By highlighting specifics and peculiarities unique to each stage of the faith development process, Westerhoff raises questions related to that which transcends chronological maturity. He makes reference to a number of psycho-social stimuli that impact maturity and hence the ability to embrace change as an inevitable and necessary component of the process of maturity. In advocating for the importance and value of *social enculturation* as distinctly different from *indoctrination*, Westerhoff argues that while *indoctrination* seeks to pass on normative values in a manner that is decidedly passive, that is to say, does not encourage discussion, mutuality and related engagement but focuses primarily on transmitting information with the objective of impacting and controlling behavior, *social enculturation* provides opportunities for passing on culture in ways that are respectful of learning theories in conversation with individual experiences. In other words, an objective of social enculturation is the relational engagement of learners, utilizing a methodology that serves to tease out and so give value to that experienced within their unique environments. As a consequence, those involved are facilitated

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<sup>20</sup> Will Our Children have Faith pg. 79

towards becoming shapers of both the process and outcomes of their learning, eventually becoming active participants in their own as well as the transformation of others within the Community.

In her adaptation of an original work by Don Kimball (1987)<sup>21</sup>, Lisa Kimball<sup>22</sup> utilizes the visual effects created by a “Wedge” to reflect on Westerhoff’s *Styles of Faith Development*. This very practical adaptation, drawing as it does on aspects of the catechetical method, links each developmental stage highlighted by Westerhoff viz. *Experienced, Affiliative, Searching and Owned* with that involved in an evolving and deepening spirituality, that begins with introduction to the Faith Community and [hopefully] progressing, to the point of acceptance, where faith is owned and embraced in ways that lead to the discernment of vocation and leadership within and on behalf of the Community.

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<sup>21</sup> Kimball, Don: *Power And Presence*; San Francisco, CA: Harper and Rowe

<sup>22</sup> Not related to Don Kimball

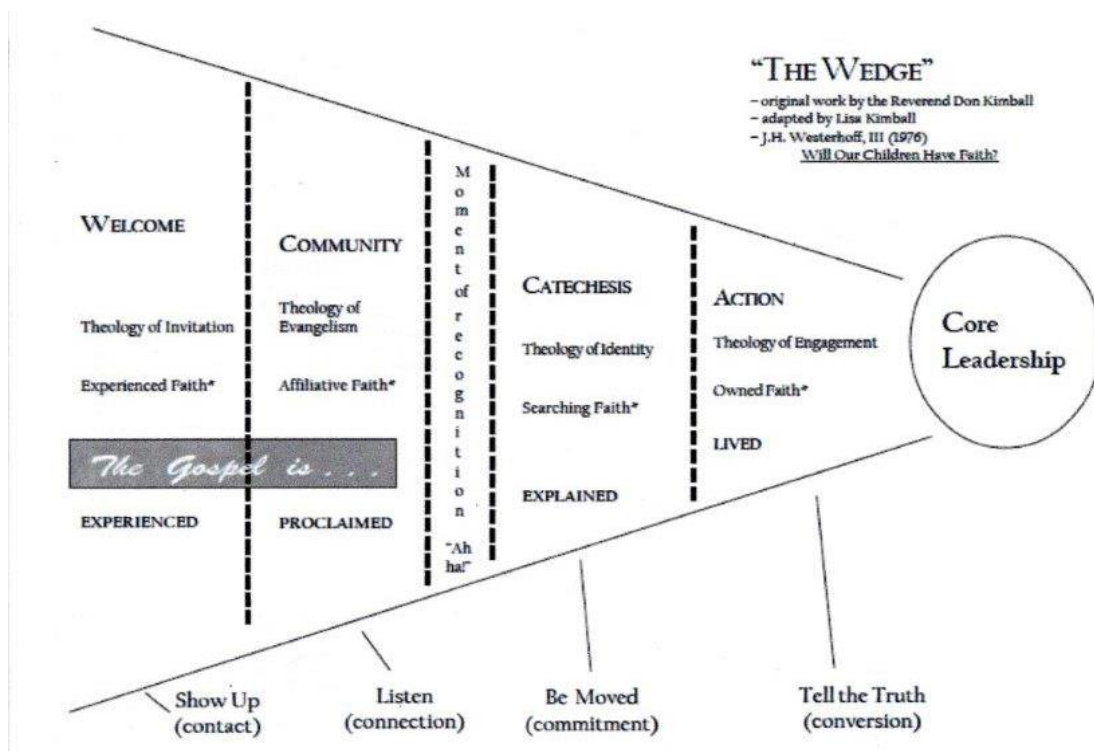


Figure 3<sup>23</sup>

“The Wedge” identified at Figure 3, highlights two significant points for discussion and analysis in relation to the thesis being advanced herein. These are set out hereunder...

1. The fact that leadership, within the Faith Community usually receives a positive response from [arguably] only a small percentage of its membership, gives credence to the theory that the path towards vocational clarity and acceptance, is not as fluid in reality, as it may seem in theory [visually]. In other words, participation in the life of the Community does not automatically result in acceptance of leadership roles, a reality that is identified particularly among younger generations.
2. Between the stages described by Kimball as *connection* and *conversion*, are presumed opportunities for pedagogical engagement or *catechesis*. Such

<sup>23</sup> Kimball, Lisa “The Wedge” An Adaptation

encounters it may be argued would have the overarching objective of creating an environment in which the faith is taught and communicated in ways that both anticipate and facilitate enlightenment and/or... the acceptance of and openness to possibilities that inhere in the further process of discernment with specific reference to vocation.

The preceding points raise issues, both theoretically and practically, concerning the employment of *'enculturation'* as a prime method of engagement in the search for spiritual maturity and vocational discernment, particularly among youth and young adults. It may be argued therefore, that engaging such a process, facilitates the bridging of existing "gaps" and enables faith development, only within a context that is mutually supportive, nonjudgmental and hence, capable of generating possibilities for growth i.e. the [further] discernment of vocations. It is arguably only in such an environment as that earlier described, that transition from one style to the next i.e. *searching to ownership* becomes both possible and practicable. Throughout his work, Westerhoff seems to be deliberate in his use of the term *catechesis* which, understood in conjunction with his *enculturation* method, emphasizes a process of learning that takes place between and among persons [of all ages], with the specific intention of aiding *conscientization*<sup>24</sup> or the active consciousness that leads to unreserved participation and involvement in the life of the community.

If one were to analyze the foregoing in light of the Jamaican Diocese's current [youth/young adult] membership crisis, one may be tempted towards an expectation of

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<sup>24</sup> A word made popular by the Brazilian Paulo Freire in the 1970's that addresses the matter of Critical Consciousness in relation to in-depth understanding of all that facilitates the breaking down of inequalities and fostering cohesion.



the transition between the *experienced* and *affiliative* domains of Westerhoff's styles of faith development, portrayed on "*The Wedge*" as the points of *contact and connection*, to be more or less seamless. The fact is, these correspond with the stages of the physical, emotional and spiritual development within youth and young adults in which challenges and difficulties, associated with making personal faith responses to that taught and experienced are present in a predominantly latent form, but have not begun to exert the kind of pressure that clamor for immediate response. Beyond these styles, however, where *searching faith* is expected to transition to *owned faith*, creating space for catechesis and the possible embrace of vocation, the experience of many individuals and hence congregations, is that the anticipated movement is stymied. What is experienced is a falling off in terms of attendance with levels of participation in the Community, showing increasing signs of decline and this, even where age appropriate activities may in fact be present. It is as a consequence of and in relation to such issues that congregations [begin to] experience the exodus of their [younger] members and find difficulty in identifying and/or outlining solutions in response to this phenomenon.

The almost prophetic clarity embedded in the admonition "*Mind the Gap*" therefore, is one that ought to be acknowledged and heeded, given the fact of the statistics cited at *Figure 2*. The admonition turns the spotlight on the fact that the Church's usual modus operandi, with respect to discipleship, is one in which preparatory work in introducing *catechetical* content and the pedagogical methods employed thereto, seem to constitute little more than information giving. These methods it would seem, are employed, arguably without due regard to contingent issues and concerns affecting religious belief and practice. As a result, they do very little by way of encouraging the kind of dialogue

that is necessary in any process aimed at escaping what may be described as the swirling vortex of frustration and disquiet, among younger generations. In light of these assumptions, it seems only natural to affirm that it is within those *impressionable* styles, identified by Westerhoff and adapted by Kimball, that deliberate steps ought to be taken to ensure that deliberate and focused attention is paid to younger generations. Additionally, careful observation ought to be made, with respect to their concerns, questions, insights and evolving worldview, in order to identify in collaboration with them, telltale signs and characteristics of uncertainty, unbelief or cynicism with respect to religious belief that may be in evidence and also with them, to apply needed remedies. When the reality and presence of these signs is neither identified nor engaged within a context marked by understanding and care, there is a widening of “*gaps*” and the potential for full blown alienation. The process of enculturation, therefore, should ideally begin at the point of entry/contact where members in general and young people in particular, *show up*. It should then be honed into becoming a characteristic feature of catechesis that is engaging and so able to facilitate both explicit and implicit learning, enabling and motivating participants towards ease of transition from uncertainty to faith and ultimately vocational ownership and leadership.

The preceding speaks cumulatively then to the imperative of an intentional and thorough examination of that which creates the hiatus. What is it that causes the relative enthusiasm, experienced by young and emerging adults, within the domain of affiliation to dissipate and lead more often than not, to disillusionment, lack of motivation towards and interest in Church related activities, new programs notwithstanding? “*Gaps*” therefore, as they are observed in both the generational divide and catechetical method,

may yet be regarded as openings; they can be perceived as indicators of fertile ground into which seeds of faith may be planted, nurtured and allowed to germinate. In such a case, the concept and practice of *enculturation* viz. inter-generational engagement that embraces the sacredness of the experiences, questions and concerns of all, can become a characteristic feature and focal point of catechesis that is aligned to the *energetic discipleship* anticipated in the Diocesan Vision.

#### Congregational Mentoring – A Lifeline:

The thesis being advanced therefore, rests on the assumption that a [possible] solution to the problem[s] of spiritual inertia and numerical decline, among the youth and young adult population[s] of the Diocese, resides in the affirmation and engagement of a faith formation and vocational discernment process I have chosen to name *Congregational Mentoring*<sup>25</sup>. I would argue further, that the identification and training of potential *Congregational Mentors*,<sup>26</sup> who are taught and encouraged to utilize the catechetical methods of engagement cited earlier, that are informed by principles of *social enculturation*, would create opportunities for entire congregations and in particular those of younger generations within them, to discern and clarify their vocations with the possibility of fully embracing and effectively engaging their purpose, within the Community.

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<sup>25</sup> The idea of Congregational Mentoring is being mooted as a way of facilitating young Anglicans, within their local congregations, towards finding their individual and collective voice, on issues of spirituality and vocational discernment. They would be able, in the company of local mentors and peers, to identify, unpack and engage the various elements of these issues, as they inform and impact [the embrace of] leadership at the local and by extension, diocesan levels.

<sup>26</sup> Persons with a vocation to and have been trained to exercise such a ministry.

To this end it is anticipated that a process of sensitization and training aimed at introducing a path towards the discernment of vocations, that will target individuals within the 18 – 35 age cohorts, would in effect lay the foundation for the creation of a cadre of such Mentors. These individuals would operate within their respective congregations, encouraging and facilitating others, especially among their peers, along similar processes of learning and preparation to enable the transition from *searching* to *owned* faith, activating the vision of *joyful and energetic* discipleship, both within and outside the community.

An interesting assumption embedded in the hypothesis, centers on the notion that Church growth results where there is a shift in focus, away from the rigid pursuit of pre-determined outcomes, based on archaic systems. Acknowledging the unique gifts of individuals and groups therefore, helps to highlight the cumulative nature of the community's spiritual journey and development; it also gives credence to the interrelatedness of the community's being and sense of belonging, experienced by individual members. The journey and [ultimate] goal of the community therefore, is realized in the positive influence it exerts upon and within surrounding cultures and systems.

Based on the foregoing, the theory being advanced highlights the endless possibilities resident in a faith community that values the importance and contributions of each of its members; a community in which the creation of [literal and figurative] *space* for sharing individual and corporate experiences and gifts, is a characteristic of its being. In the final analysis then, it behooves those within the leadership echelons of such a community, to ensure that experiences of spiritual growth and related developments are valued and

shared in an atmosphere marked by mutual respect and being inclusive, cuts across and is therefore open, to all age groups.

One way of ensuring the development and maintenance of such an atmosphere and outcome, particularly among younger generations, is developing and encouraging establishment of networks among those who [will] eventually accept the call to become mentors. In these networks, demonstrated conversance with the unique peculiarities of the various styles of faith development will become a goal, even as it will provide motivation for and facilitate better relationships. When this becomes the case, achieving [realistic] mission goals that hold practical discipleship strategies and the discerning of vocations in balance, is a distinct possibility.

In providing a rationale for the subsequent revision of his original theory based it would seem on a view of the relationship between his previously advanced styles and church membership (growth), Westerhoff (1980) alludes to the fact that faith, like a pilgrimage, is a gradual movement of understandings and expressions<sup>27</sup>. As a consequence of this evolving in his experience and research, Westerhoff advanced a modified version of his original *styles of faith* development, reducing the progression described therein from four to three. It is this latter version<sup>28</sup> to which we will, at this juncture give focus. We will in essence be discussing inherent psycho-social and cognitive characteristics germane to each style. In addition we will suggest a methodology that highlights awareness of how the intentional positive treatment of their peculiarities in exercising discipleship can, cumulatively, assist in bridging existing “*gaps*.”

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<sup>27</sup> Bringing up Children in the Christian Faith; Chapter entitled: A Journey Together in Faith

<sup>28</sup> Pg.80ff Will Our Children Have Faith

## The (Modified) Styles:

1. **Affiliative Faith:** Basic to this style, according to Westerhoff is the element of trust. The old adage “*actions speak louder than words*” can best be applied as a way of explaining what happens at this stage. Because psychologically, children and adolescents wrestle with the need to belong, the manner in which the community understands and responds to this need, goes a far way in deciding the how of the youngsters response. In other words, at this stage of their development, children and adolescents are more likely to *hear* what we **do**...how we behave, more readily than they would that which we **say**. Based on those experiences, they will either respond to or react against [being part of] the Community; making it as a source of authority.
2. **Searching Faith:** Within this faith style, what Westerhoff suggests is indicative of what may be described as *active doubt* which, improperly handled, has potential to become full blown alienation. It is here therefore, that young people are seeking to frame their understanding of reality in order to ensure clarity and congruence with their own self-understanding and perceived relationship with the community. Questions at this stage are more likely to be signs of genuine interest in belonging rather than rebellion.
3. **Mature (Owned) Faith:** This is the stage, it is suggested, at which the *dependence* and *independence* observed in the first two, begin to assume informed understanding of what it means to be an individual within community. That which is highlighted at this stage is in search of a response that seeks to elevate the role of *interdependence*. It is here, therefore, that the potential for *owning* the

community's faith and traditions as a spiritually mature member is at its highest. As a consequence, the relationship of care and nurture extended to or denied individuals, in this and previous stages of searching, will impact, for better or worse, the outcomes with respect to the bridging or widening of "gaps".

Based on the preceding, it is perhaps easier to equate the styles of faith development with chronological maturity and related action/reflection. It can be argued also, that although posited largely on the assumption of chronological and hence psychological maturity, these styles of faith may also be applied in cases and situations where focused and intentional community care and nurture from the stage of *Affiliation* onward, can lead to a mature embrace and ownership of faith, among individuals who, with reference to chronology, are relatively young. In other words, it is entirely possible to exhibit what may be construed as a mature faith, with openness to discerning vocational possibilities within the community, at a chronological age that does not align with what is normally referred to as adult.

When the preceding theories are juxtaposed with the reality of declining membership and participation among youth and young adults in the diocese of Jamaica, a number of possible reasons underlying the problem, begin to emerge. There are three (3), each of which is directly connected to the previous one, that are in essence pivotal to the thesis being advanced. They are outlined and analyzed hereunder.

1. **Deficient Modus Operandi:** or over-reliance on the kind of instruction that is centered largely on giving information, relegating the significance of experiential learning to a very low place.

2. **Limited Experiential Engagement:** which reduces the scope and capacity for engaging aspects of spiritual nurture that are easier *caught* than *taught*.
3. **Lack of Defined Strategies:** which make the path to the desired outcome[s] unclear and reduces the ability to adequately evaluate whether or not objectives have been achieved.

#### Deficient Modus Operandi:

It may be argued that a deficiency of traditional Anglican spirituality, in a Caribbean cultural context that is predominantly oral, remains its penchant for methods of engagement that assume a largely literary audience. As such, there is covert denial of the authenticity and hence the validity of those [oral] traditions that contribute to the unique brand of the spirituality of Anglicans within the region. To advocate a spirituality that denies this reality therefore, is tantamount to marginalizing and ultimately alienating [would-be] members whose preferred way of being Church is predicated in large part on engaging those oral and other traditions within which their spiritual wellbeing is rooted. This deficiency remains a primary reason for the observable lack of interest among younger generations, for whom there is limited opportunity to participate in the life of the Church, in ways that value the contributions of non-literary and non-traditional experiences and expressions.

The Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands have moved far and away from the position of prominence it held during the colonial era and early days of independence from British rule. In its three hundred and fifty plus years, it has had to face the perennial challenge of sociocultural and economic evolutions, and like many former monopolies,



continues to struggle with maintaining its unique identity in relation to that of the people[s] among and to whom it ministers.

A significant aspect of this ongoing dilemma is the struggle to remain relevant in what is, without doubt, a post-Christendom era. Put another way, because Christian values are becoming less and less germane to the mores of contemporary society, the Church is faced with the challenge of clarifying its identity amidst mounting indifference or worse, cynicism.

A 2012 survey<sup>29</sup> commissioned by the Diocesan division of training [Department of Mission and Ministry] and conducted by Jamaican pollster William ‘Bill’ Johnson, revealed that the Anglican Church was, in the minds of many [younger] Jamaicans, gradually “*descending into irrelevancy*”. This conclusion was arrived at based on observable trends with respect to an exodus of younger [25 – 40 year old] members from congregations across the Diocese and evidenced by the fact that the median age of the average Anglican parishioner, stood at 50 years i.e. 11 years older than that of the overall average age of the population of Jamaica.

It seems clear that the difficulty the Church faces in reaching members and potential members, particularly of younger generations, is directly related to its missionary modus operandi and what may be construed, according to John Westerhoff, as reticence, to engage a methodology that relies as much on interaction as it does instruction<sup>30</sup> i.e. encouraging inter and cross generational experiences to become the bridge that enables a

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<sup>29</sup> Pg. 6; Commissioned Survey Report

<sup>30</sup> Bringing up Children in the Christian Faith; Chapter entitled: A Journey together in Faith.

narrowing of the gap, even as it provides for a more credible and cogent expression of spirituality.

#### Limited Experiential Engagement:

Given the fact that Christian education programs are usually age specific, and related content delivered in a manner that relies in large part on giving information, the ability to engage in inter-generational experiential sharing is extremely limited. The present approach to discipleship in the Diocese of Jamaica relies heavily on the delivery of content that is pitched at the presumed level of maturity, of the group for which it has been prepared. Underlying that approach also, is the fact that maturity is calculated based on chronological age. Those who are considered adults therefore, are instructed in ways that are deemed appropriate to their age, the same approach being employed for those not considered adults. Even where there may be opportunities for innovations within the pedagogical method, the process by and large does not allow for the kind of experiential sharing that facilitates robust discussion, the unpacking of issues, questions and concerns that are relevant to the seeker's quest for understanding and meaning.

There is limited scope for the kind of engagement in which the experiences of different generations are shared in a manner that is able to aid understanding and facilitate the building of healthy and wholesome relationships. There is every reason to believe therefore, that when the discipleship and the process of spiritual nurture are engaged in a manner that is respectful of and therefore places no limitations on experiential sharing, possibilities for increased and better relationships within and among the different generations are endless.

### Lack of Defined Strategies:

As a consequence of the two previous reasons outlined strategies and objectives that clearly outline the path to spiritual and numerical growth among the Church's membership and especially among those that fall within the categories of youth and young adults, are very few and far between. This deficiency zooms in on the importance of methodology anchored to strategy, implied in the Diocesan Vision Statement's affirmation of lively and energetic discipleship. That further discussion with respect to creating the environment for engaging the method being proposed and grounding it in the Church's theology of Baptism will provide content for the chapter to follow.

## CHAPTER II

### “Towards Faith Ownership and Vocational Discernment”

#### *Creating and Establishing the Environment*

##### Community of Faith Defined:

There exists a real possibility that the average Anglican in the diocese of Jamaica and the Cayman Islands, has at some point, either heard or themselves made reference to the Church as *Community of Faith* that is to say the *ecclesia*: that body, whether local or general, whose members (*differences in doctrine, theology and related idiosyncrasies notwithstanding*) experience a profound sense of corporate belonging and as a consequence, are able to draw upon a unique and supportive energy that fuels their ability to live with purpose and hope, from one day or season to another. Individual members of the *Community* are facilitated in this regard, to embrace and therefore function, guided by the principle of belonging to a larger network serving a greater good: a system that facilitates individual development even as it fosters mutuality and corporate enhancement – a body that can be relied on by individuals, for literal and figurative support.

From its early beginnings i.e. before becoming *institutionalized*, the Church as a corporate body, has held aloft the objective of being – even as it embraced the evolving journey towards becoming – an *organism* that facilitates the spiritual growth and development of individual members, even as it highlights the importance of the organizational parameters within which it would [co]operate<sup>31</sup>. There is every reason to assume therefore, that germane to the Church’s ability to function effectively as an ecclesial entity, is the notion of an authentic spirituality, gifted and bestowed upon every

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<sup>31</sup> Acts 2:43-47 cf. I Corinthians 12

member – age, gender, social and or economic status notwithstanding – who in and by a process of evolving, becomes a part of and thereby, experiences the personal and corporate transformation that result. Jonathan Lamb (2006)<sup>32</sup> makes a rather pertinent observation in this vein, with respect to challenges that double as opportunities. In doing so, he highlights and fact that nurturing and supporting an individual’s adaptability within a context that requires navigating challenging spiritual pathways along the journey of life, allows for the mutual advancement of both the individual traveler, so to speak, and the Community in/by which he/she is supported. He opines...

*“It is God’s purpose that, through the rough and tumble of Christian community, we should grow in Christian maturity.”*

Based on the foregoing, it seems reasonable to assert that at its very core, the concept of the Church as *Community of the Faithful*, creates and brings to the fore, images of an entity, anchored in disciplines of prayer, study, fellowship and hospitality, that bear striking resemblance in its modus operandi, to that, known in Jamaican/Caribbean culture as the *extended family*. In other words, the Church as *Community of the Faithful* is a body that, being more than the sum of its individual parts, is united in its diversity and therefore able, in the exercise of both its potential and actual gifts, to manifest possibilities that inhere in the designation...*people of God*.

Within this uniquely corporate body therefore, those with the gift of years, that is to say...older, more mature members, ought to be recognized as being so endowed and encouraged to offer the wisdom of their years to younger generations who in turn should

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<sup>32</sup> Pg. 23 Leading with Integrity

be encouraged and facilitated in bringing new and fresh insights and perspectives, as they represent current and more modern approaches to the experience of the building of a caring and nurturing Community.

That which may ultimately be anticipated, is a unique kind of co-existence, one that is characterized by the interactions and connectedness within and among both groups. Such a way of being can create as well as contribute to a veritable melting pot that highlights even as it celebrates the holistic and dynamic nature of a Community of the Faithful and more importantly, the relationship of individual members, age notwithstanding, operating in partnership with each other and the One who ultimately sustains them. Over time then, it is anticipated that intergenerational bonds and connections being forged, will serve to broaden the scope of the relationships and add greater dynamism to the *Community* spirit, creating thereby, a distinctive set of hallmarks and goals, the attainment of which has correctly been identified as a *lifelong pursuit*.

#### Changing Values and the Community of Faith:

The reality of changing values and standards however, evidenced in shifting goals and expectations, relative to acceptable norms and patterns of behavior that are, in many ways, linked to the evolution of social and religious understanding, have in a real sense highlighted an undeniable need within the *Community of Faith*, for a process of re-thinking, re-evaluating and therefore, re-envisioning its *modus operandi*. This is so, particularly in relation to the desire to disciple and embrace with authenticity and credibility, those within generational groups often described as *up and coming*.

The ability to transcend mere co-existence therefore, or to put it another way, the goal of internalizing the image of God, to the extent of accepting the full reality of that image in all persons, especially those from different and presumed difficult generations, is more than just an imperative of numerical Church growth; it is in actual fact, a call for individual Christians to embrace with probity and sincerity, their own unique self-understanding. This must be done in order that the joy and sense of fulfillment in enabling another to experience and achieve a similar status and so begin a process of laying the foundation towards the building and maintenance of genuine *Community* is achieved. Within such a dynamic milieu, there exists something of a *challenge* that, depending on the lenses through which it is viewed, also doubles as *opportunity*. To be sure, charting a course towards the ultimate goal is inextricably linked to carrying out the requirements of the Great Commission<sup>33</sup> i.e. of being actively engaged as co-laborers, in executing the divine purpose: for human relationship with God, each other and hence for wholeness.

#### Nurturing Faith and Reframing Hope in Community:

In a rather affirming preface to *Greenhouses of Hope*, (2010) a compilation of selected ethnographic studies, with an overarching theme highlighting the role of *congregations as nurturing communities fostering vocational discernment among younger generations* and edited by Dorie Grinenko-Baker, educator and social activist Parker Palmer<sup>34</sup>, alludes to the fact that embracing the cumulative wisdom from the contributions contained within the volume, is a way towards “*reframing hope*”. In other words, while each contributing

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<sup>33</sup> Matthew 28:18ff.

<sup>34</sup> Pg.26 Green Houses of Hope

ethnographer speaks out of a context that is uniquely theirs and as such, different from any of the others contained in the volume, there remains an undeniable thread of similarity and congruence pervading each *story*; it is the notion that communities of worship, particularly those rooted within historic [archaic] and presumed outmoded traditions, still possess the capacity to provide [literal and metaphoric] space, within which spiritual, even numeric growth and development, especially among younger generations, can be facilitated and honed. These, it may be argued, are the kinds of *Communities* that nurture the desire to make fresh starts and so are constantly renewing themselves; that they are facilitated along paths of growth and development therefore, becomes a characteristic of their existence. Such *Communities*, it must be highlighted, both advocate for and enable the search for human wholeness by employing inspired and inspiring methodologies that *speak* healingly, to situations of individual and/or corporate brokenness, offering possibilities for renewal and consequently, demonstrating the eternal nature of hope.

Ethnographic contributions in *Green Houses of Hope* highlight issues relative to faith ownership and vocational discernment that have roots deeply embedded in the *catholic* interpretation of the *Theology of Baptism*<sup>35</sup>. Though varied in their individual content, they all highlight a singular objective, that of presenting the Church above all else, as *Community of the Faithful*, where radical welcome and spiritual nurture are characteristic features. Put another way, because Baptism is that rite signaling entry (membership) into the *Catholic faith*, one can infer/conclude that the Church ought to be engaged in finding and embracing creative formularies for enabling vocational discernment and developing

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<sup>35</sup> Pg. 3 Being Christian



the desire and willingness to engage the same among those within younger age categories, for the individual and corporate good.

Consequent on the foregoing, it may be further argued, that in light of the baptismal foundation upon which these formularies rest, engaging them cannot be regarded as an optional exercise. In fact, if the Anglican Church hopes to refute and therefore, lay to rest accusations being leveled at it, of being out of touch with reality, then the appropriation of discipleship methods and processes, upheld by a clarified understanding of its baptismal theology, must become the fulcrum that controls and from which both its inward and outward movements, are directed.

The foregoing objective will most certainly not be achieved, however, by skirting those difficult but altogether pertinent issues and ultimate questions, responses to which are integral to the overall wellbeing of the *Community* and in particular, those within the younger generations being targeted. In fact, the [Anglican] tendency to circumnavigate difficult issues and questions by means of an avoidance methodology, is tantamount to showing scant regard for the creation and maintenance of the kind of environment within which honest *'trialogue'*<sup>36</sup> i.e. the ability at one and the same time, to relate inter-generationally and with God, can be successfully engaged, given the fact that this is a distinguishing feature of the *Community's* togetherness. Concomitantly, where such openness and resulting synergy are in operation, possibilities for the health of and growth in human relationships and spiritual understanding become both an anticipated and lived reality. Such then is the framework for renewed understanding of the primacy of the

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<sup>36</sup> A word I coined to describe the three way communication of God, older and younger generations, in a way that allows each to hear and respond to the other

*Theology of Baptism* in highlighting the significance of the *Community of Faith* metaphor and therewith, the corporate nature of vocational discernment as being a gift in and for *Community*, that focuses on and seeks to elicit individual response[s].

#### Lifelong Learning in Community:

One key principle, highlighted earlier and running throughout the various offerings, is that which speaks to lifelong learning<sup>37</sup> In this regard, there is very little if any room for assumptions viz. the taking for granted that awareness or presumed understanding and acceptance of doctrines, values and life principles germane to faith development, is guaranteed simply by means of association. In other words, the tendency in Anglican circles, and certainly in my own experience of the Jamaican context, to assume a high level of religious awareness and/or spirituality among the *faithful* simply by dint of church attendance, has proved time and again to be a fallacy. This has been brought to light primarily, in relation to the Church's failure to identify, define and offer workable solutions with respect to those problems and areas of concern that continuously breed disenchantment and subsequently, lead to member hemorrhage.

The exodus of [younger] generations from the Anglican Church to newer, non-traditional churches, in light of the much vaunted theological depth of Anglican spirituality, is in essence the issuing of a wakeup call, heralding the need for an intentional re-imagining of the method[s] by which its theology and discipleship methods are conveyed and engaged. Concomitantly, changes and/or modifications must be consistently introduced and applied in order to provide fuel, as it were, to maintain robust and energetic youth/young

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<sup>37</sup>Pg.72 Learning While Leading

adult membership and participation within in the Community, in ways that count towards both its physical and spiritual *attractiveness*.

The assertions made in the preceding paragraphs, harkens back to my own youthful experiences, in the era of the '70's growing up within the Anglican Church in rural Jamaica. It was there that I first began to wrestle with challenges commensurate with a personal desire to embrace a simple but deeply rooted spirituality, manifested in unapologetic pride in being a Christian formed within the Anglican tradition. Very little was done then, by way of intentional and focused discipleship and/or faith formation. The ability to mentor others towards authentic spirituality therefore, viz. to form persons for deeper understanding and application of faith perspectives for the purpose of engendering commitment to the search for timeless spiritual treasures, has to be more than a process of trial and error, undertaken by the relatively small number of ministry practitioners who are prepared, amidst challenges and obstacles notwithstanding, to engage such a process.

To be sure, some progress has been made in the Jamaica/Cayman diocese in recent years; the introduction in 2012 of a locally produced Diocesan Sunday school curriculum [the cumulative effort of a work undertaken over a number of years] with other programs targeting *millennials*, remains a case in point. While the strides being made are commendable, there remains yet a significant fall off in the number of youth and young adults, making the transition from the stage of *questioning* to that of *faith ownership* (cf. *Westerhoff's Styles of Faith Development*).<sup>38</sup> The existence of this *gap* as it were, has been the catalyst, influencing the continuing dilemma of membership decline referred to earlier. Those frequently asked and largely unanswered questions, surrounding the *why* of

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<sup>38</sup> Will Our Children Have Faith

this phenomenon, point no doubt to a number of deficiencies in the application of principles governing the ministry to, with and among younger generations. While it may be argued that such deficiencies are not a reflection on the lack or quality of the content of the programs being produced, they highlight however what seems to be the myopic nature of the methodologies being employed and the fact that their continued application, lofty content notwithstanding, will always result in a level of disconnect that cannot easily be repaired, at least not without a definite shift in focus and method.

There is a perceived lack of focused intentionality for example, in facilitating faith formation and vocational discernment exercises, commensurate with the cognitive and emotional changes represented at the various stages of development identified by Westerhoff. One is of the view therefore, that the exodus referred to in previous chapters, is directly related to faulty discernment methods and missed pedagogical opportunities that result in a stymieing of the transition from *questioning* to *owning* the faith. In summary then, the situation, as it has been outlined and described, tells a tale of missed opportunities; these may be the result of innocent ignorance but they lead to the *disenchantment* that has been observed.

What seems to be clear, in light of the preceding, is the fact that when the Church makes unsubstantiated assumptions about its (young) members and, based on those assumptions, initiates and pursues programs that circumvent rather than focus on the issues and ultimate questions that are at the heart of their disquiet, it inadvertently sends a message regarding the significance of not only those issues and questions but also and perhaps more so, the questioners themselves. Youth and young adults in particular, have protested time and again, both verbally and by walking away, their need for the genuine acceptance

in the Community that transcends being regarded as mere observers whose participation and involvement are more often than not relegated to the future i.e. when they become *adults*.

Their protest speaks perhaps, to the deeply held belief that there is a connection between precepts of Anglican spirituality, rooted in its Baptismal theology and the Church's practice or living out of the same, in unconditional embrace of youth and young adults as fully integrated members. When theological understanding becomes praxis, awareness and acceptance of the presence of younger generations as a gift to the Community is evident and consequently, there is increasing recognition of the importance of their involvement and participation to its authenticity and the continued exercise of its mission.

It is with respect to the preceding that the Church's theology of Baptism speaks volumes and highlights the imperative of an environment within which intentional methods of nurturing and discernment can facilitate the spiritual growth of the entire community and by extension, the kind of faith ownership among its youth and young adult members that will help to sustain it.

This, by and large is the image conveyed by *Green Houses of Hope*<sup>39</sup>, the title of the volume referred to earlier. It is an image that portrays possibilities of growth in congregations that focus more on the process of discipleship that is nothing short of consistency in the nurturing and care extended to (young) lives. The kind of nurture being described, looks beyond the messiness often associated with engaging issues that require plumbing depths of human/spiritual conditions, especially when no easy or readymade

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<sup>39</sup> Lot 56 in Kindle Edition of *Green Houses of Hope*

answers are to be found. It is the image of an environment in which superficiality is eschewed so that the entire Community is both challenged and facilitated in their search for that which is genuinely meaningful, purposeful and intimate, in their relationship with God and each other. This is the kind of Community where faith ownership is enjoined through processes of vocational discernment that become a way of being for every member. These processes bring the community together, furthering the objective of holding to values and principles that esteem spiritual maturity and wholeness of being, over and above the maintenance of traditions.

In all this, there is a definite highlighting of the manner in which the place, role and method of the gift and process of discernment to and within the Community is conveyed. This discipline that brings blessings to both individual and group, embodies the spirit and essence of what it means to be a Community in which individual members experience aspects of faith development which, though unique to their own spirituality, contribute to the Community's overall spiritual vibrancy. I would contend further that a sensitively created process of discernment, facilitated by trained and committed individuals for whom the *'trialogue'* referred to earlier, becomes a priority, has potential to stir and generate the kind of interest within and among the Church's younger members; that stirring reaches beyond questions of mere membership implied in the term participant observer, to deeper levels of spiritual awareness and recognition that are able to usher them towards and ultimately within spheres of vocational awareness and possibilities. Such leaders I have referred to as *Congregational Mentors* or localized enablers of faith and vocational discernment. They will be tasked with the blessed albeit challenging role of walking alongside youth and young adults; theirs will be the privileged task of

facilitating the creation of sacred spaces... where questions, concerns, challenges and opportunities that appertain to spiritual development, are brought to light and aired in ways that demonstrate sensitivity and the value of the contributions of each to the larger body..

#### The Local Catechist: An Antecedent of the Congregational Mentor:

In its halcyon days of being the de facto moral/ethical compass of the nation[s], the Anglican Church in Jamaica took great pride in its ability to influence communities within which it had a physical presence. To be sure, there was no mistaking the Church's involvement in the finer details of the nation's human, spiritual, social and economic development<sup>40</sup>. A rather significant contribution to that development came by way of its involvement in education. To its great credit, the Church accomplished a pioneering feat by establishing primary education institutions across sections of the island<sup>41</sup>. It was able in this way, to exert positive influence upon the mores and hence the psyche of the nation. Through the appointment of principals of Church owned primary schools who also had a vocation as Catechists, the Church had a visible and positive impact within and upon the wider society. Principles and values germane to the faith became a distinctive feature of the kind and quality educational leadership extended to the communities in which this ministerial influence was extended.

Not only were Catechists generally knowledgeable with respect to the prevailing cultures and practices, they engendered and maintained the kind of rapport with the general populace that facilitated ease of confidence and trust. It is in this regard then, that they

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<sup>40</sup> Preliminary Report on the Anglican Church (2012)

<sup>41</sup> From presentation on the History of the Anglican Church in Jamaica, to Supplementary Ministry Trainees (May 2018) by: Professor Veront Satchel (University of the West Indies)

were able to *'teach'* the faith, in terms of that which issued from their pulpit proclamations supported by the relationships they developed in their day to day interactions. Those (mostly) men, earned the respect of their communities and, being held in high esteem as representatives of a much respected Church, extended the institution's influence far beyond its numeric viability, to encompass the total wellbeing of the people it served.

It is this image and practice of caring, above and beyond the enforcement of doctrinal principles, rules and regulations, infused with the ability and theological sensitivity to facilitate the discernment of vocations, that is here being advanced. It is an image of the Church and its constituent membership, sustained by the nurturing and fostering of spiritual growth and development over and above ecclesiastical expediency, that I believe can be captured, modified and further developed in the office and ministry of the *Congregational Mentor*. This remains a unique vocation with tremendous potential to facilitate the change[s] necessary to ensure a ministry with and among the Church's (younger) membership, that is relevant in its response to the changing times and the troubling numerical and spiritual decline being experienced therewith.

These are times in which there seems to exist a razor thin line between what would normally be accepted in religious circles as the practice of healthy skepticism and the mocking cynicism that is fast becoming the response of too many youth and young adults, whose experience of the Church is as an institution that is unable and in many respects unprepared in its praxis, to acknowledge and take the necessary steps to adequately deal with, the life issues and questions with which they grapple daily. It is the Church's presumed lack of response to these challenges it seems, that may somehow be



preventing any positive and sustained handling of that which it represents spiritually and by extension, the spinoff in numeric growth and continued influence in the lives of those among whom it seeks to impact with the liberating message of the *Gospel*. In a very real sense, both the verbal and non-verbal messages being communicated to the Church by the sustained and continuing exodus of its (younger) members, is that it faces the prevailing challenge[s] with honesty by actively demonstrating a willingness to engage whatever corrective measures will be required to ensure both the credibility and sustainability of its witness, or risk becoming even more out of touch or worse, obsolete.

The preceding descriptions, of what on the surface seems a hopeless and dire situation, given the attendant challenges, is irredeemable however, and so beg a closer, more intentional look into possibilities for redemption. More importantly, those very challenges may prove, in this [2014 – 2019] season of Diocesan re-visioning<sup>42</sup> and intentional discipleship, to be like a catalyst, possessing the ability to spark the kind of (re)action that is able to facilitate focused and systematic attempts at addressing the current malaise.

#### Discerning Vocation – ‘Emancipatory Hope’ In Action:

The ability to discern a vocation, although intensely personal, takes on significant meaning when engaged within the context of Community. It is the character of Community to fuel an individual’s drive and, nurturing that which may be embryonic, provides the tender massaging that enables preparation for the birthing and ultimate flowering of vocation. Where youth and young adults are made to feel welcome and

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<sup>42</sup> Declared by the Diocesan Bishop at the Annual Synod held in 2014

needed; where the total package of person, talents and skills is recognized as gift to the Community,<sup>43</sup> the likelihood of their ability to hear and respond to vocation increases as they come to realize and acknowledge that being experienced as an extension of divine acknowledgement of their value and worth as fellow workers.

The ability to discern and therefore positively respond to vocation, especially when such discerning is upheld by a supporting Community, is in and of itself liberating. That one is constantly (re)assured of one's call to ministry within the Community is the foundation on which its engagement and exercise is honed and appropriated. The ability to discern and identify the unique nature of one's vocation therefore, is a path to *emancipatory hope*<sup>44</sup>. This speaks to a means by which younger generations of Christians, are facilitated in perceiving and actualizing, beyond presumed oppressive structures within Church and society, The One who loves without condition and values their contributions to the building of the Kingdom.

It seems fair to affirm then, in the final analysis, that *faith ownership* and *vocational discernment* are not only inextricably linked, the former must be nurtured and nourished in a caring Community in order that the opening may be created for the latter to be actualized and become more than a distant thought or elusive dream.

It is my decided opinion then, that congregations within the Diocese of Jamaica and the Cayman Islands and by extension the Anglican Province of the West Indies, would be well served not only in the present but also in the future, by affirming the office and ministry of the Congregational Mentor. This would be a ministry, anchored in the

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<sup>43</sup> Grinenko-Baker, Dory (Ed.) Green Houses of Hope

<sup>44</sup> Parker, Evelyn L. Trouble Don't Last Always; Emancipatory Hope Among African American Adolescents Cleveland. OH: Pilgrim Press 2003; Lot 1700

Church's theology of Baptism that would be focused on demonstrating by precept and example the role of a nurturing Community. A feature of this ministry, in addition to facilitating persons towards discerning vocations, would be towards harnessing and honing the gifts of the Community's younger members, as a way of signaling its intentional response to the generational dilemma. Affirming this ministry and the positive intervention it signals, would mark a step in the right direction, one leading to greater understanding of the Church's ministry to all the baptized and in particular, those who, by virtue of their youth, are often made to feel like cosmetic appendages to a system rather than integral to its existence and evolving.

In Chapter IV and with specific reference to the problem being highlighted, I will outline and explain elements of a teaching module, designed with the objective of engaging a process of discernment that can hopefully serve to enlighten persons within the target age groups. Engaging the content of the module, assumes a process intended to raise with participants, the matter of authenticity regarding their membership within the Faith Community and consequently, the importance of openness to being formed and nurtured therein, for the sharpening of their ability to discern and positively respond to vocation.

## CHAPTER III

### “Reflecting with Others”

#### *Analyzing Theological and Behavioral Science Resources and Assumptions that Inform and Provide a Rationale for the Thesis*

There remains, albeit largely by implication, a noteworthy factor that will doubtlessly be reflected in any analysis of the Diocese’s ability to actualize the *lively, energetic discipleship*<sup>45</sup> referred to in its Vision Statement. This view is predicated on the belief that the kind of and quality discipleship being advanced as a feature of that anticipated in [the movement towards] renewal, is mirrored in the nature and breadth of the missionary operative per se. One should expect therefore, that a delicate balancing act will be employed, to ensure that both theological and historical traditions are not merely maintained but engaged in ways that will ensure achievement of the desired outcome. Given all that is implied in the words *lively* and *energetic*, there can be no realistic way of achieving the stated vision in any significantly impactful or pervasive way, apart from intentional and purposeful engagement of younger generations.

Anyone who has ever been involved and/or associated with the Diocese of Jamaica and the Cayman Islands, even at a token level, would most likely agree that there has always existed a tendency, particularly among the *leadership class*,<sup>46</sup> to balk at suggestions that in essence, advocate for change[s]...viz. reviewing, altering and/or modifying methods and practices, perceived as being pertinent to the Church’s authentic image and worn very much like a second skin. In this regard, there remains a characteristic mode of operating, akin to an unwritten code that seems to declare, by active resistance more so

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<sup>45</sup> Quotation from the Diocesan Vision Statement

<sup>46</sup> An inclusive term, not limited to ordained leadership

than verbal declaration that any new method and/or practice, related to religious understanding and spiritual development, is either viewed with suspicion or considered taboo. This kind of response is particularly evident when the spotlight with respect to leadership is shifted to give focus to the gifts, talents and possibilities that inhere in persons falling within younger generation categories. Consequently, a number of extant programs aimed at driving mission have not only become archaic, they are being engaged by employing methods that are no longer effective in connecting and/or developing mutually satisfying relationships, with those within groups targeted; the ones whose active participation, the Diocesan Vision speaks to with anticipation and longing.

Additionally, and here, personal experience constitutes a significant portion of the pool within which opinions are formed and from which conclusions are drawn. Even in instances where newer methods and models have been identified and/or engaged, there always seems something of a backlash that minimizes the extent to which younger generations are given leave and opportunity to become integrally connected to the decision making process. It is this *audibly quiet* resistance, even with reference to something as innocuous as a change in personnel that produces the unfortunate end result of new and hopefully improved methods of engagement, being rendered dead in the water, before their potentialities and survival capabilities have had opportunity to be tested and/or tried.

The hoped-for vision of younger, more dynamic members, committed to a way of being informed by Anglican spirituality, has been articulated time and again and is in essence chock full of possibilities for both numerical and spiritual growth within the Diocese. The problem however, of transitioning from the stage of conceptualizing to actualizing, seems

to lie with what may in actual fact be deeply rooted *fear*...among older leaders and members, of losing that to which they have grown accustomed and with which they have always [been] identified. To effect such change[s] then, even incrementally, would be tantamount to losing a significant part of themselves...it would be to lose their sense of purpose and hence their identity. The question arises then as to how to combat such fears and thereby create the path towards a sustainable missionary operative that is theologically grounded and all-embracing in its reach.

Whilst there may be general consensus surrounding the importance of an ecclesial method of approach, sustained by the fact that it facilitates increasing awareness of the role of the *baptized* in establishing and maintaining what David Bachelder (2017)<sup>47</sup> refers to as a *baptizing community* where all are made welcome, enabled and facilitated towards deepening spirituality, that ideal is far from the reality being experienced by a large and growing number of younger persons<sup>48</sup> throughout the Diocese. The manner in which they have responded is rather telling viz.; they have *taken flight* rather than *fight*...with a perceived archaic system that borders on being unjust in its handling of issues that are germane to the Church's development in both the long and short terms. This observation carries with it an undeniable cause for concern regarding the future of a Church that has, in the past, given so much to the building of the nation[s] it serves. Consequently therefore, the metaphor of a baptizing community being and becoming a lived reality is foundational to the anticipated renewal and as such, issues a challenge to the Diocese, regarding the practical application of the theology it espouses. The very definition of

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<sup>47</sup> Pg. xix Pathways to the Waters of Grace xix

<sup>48</sup> Preliminary Report of the Anglican Church in Jamaica

*sacrament*, as “*an outward and visible sign of inward and spiritual grace*”,<sup>49</sup> speaks eloquently to the praxis that ought to be a characteristic of the Church with respect to baptismal *incorporation* [of the young], as full members of the Body of Christ. To embrace this sacramental understanding, is to act upon the pronouncements made, thereby bringing synchronicity into being i.e. enabling the union rather than disconnect between word and action[s].

Based on the preceding statements, questions may arise regarding the *how* of a baptized community facilitating the coming together of disparate generations on more than a superficial level. Furthermore, there is the matter of enabling persons from younger generations to become active participants rather than being made to feel that they are mere appendages to a process. The fact remains therefore, that all the baptized, particularly those of younger generations, ought to be encouraged and challenged toward becoming fully committed to and therefore, wholly engaged in the process that leads to deepening appreciation of the significance of their vocation, purpose and role within the Community. Again, the question being begged is pertinent in a non-rhetorical way. Is it possible for a baptized individual to experience the fullness of Community support and encouragement, even and especially when he/she belongs to a generation that is, chronologically, culturally and spiritually, far removed from those who constitute the majority of its membership?

Former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams (2014)<sup>50</sup> seems to suggest that a response to such a question can actually be in the affirmative. When the community is

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<sup>49</sup> Pg. 409 The C.P.W.I. Book of Common Prayer

<sup>50</sup> Pp. 4-5 Being Christian

prepared and encouraged to fully accept that it is in/by Baptism, the great *equalizer*, that all people, age and other differences notwithstanding, are presented as equal before God; it is then that understanding of what is required to fully and truly embrace everyone [regardless of age and other distinctions], begins to emerge as both professed and lived reality. Consequently, in tracing its history and systematically outlining the theology undergirding Baptism as the sacrament that incorporates all regardless of age, into full membership within the believing Community, not only is there a reasonable and acceptable standard for membership, there is an inherent challenge that speaks to the need for catechesis, not as a *one-off methodology* but a process of lifelong learning that introduces even as it encourages and sustains the very practice of being a Community of the baptized, embracing the further role of being a baptizing Community.

To be sure, the concept of the *Generative Adult (2006)*<sup>51</sup> posited by Dan P. McAdams seems congruent with the views expressed by Williams in highlighting the Church's understanding of Baptism as both event and process with the latter designation having the objective of restoring what it means to be truly human, in the way God intended.<sup>52</sup> Implicit in Williams' definition it seems, is the metaphor of a supportive and nurturing Community, united in their love for God and each other, to the extent that each individual is enabled to live within a consciousness of solidarity...with both the divine and others.<sup>53</sup> In theory as well as in practice therefore, the notion of *generativity*, referring as it does to the reproduction of one's own kind, addresses even by means of theoretical application, the methodical and all-embracing matter of continuity. To this end, McAdams offers an

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<sup>51</sup> Pp. 45 – 46 *The Redemptive Self*

<sup>52</sup> Pp. 46 *Being Christian*

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid* pg. 46



explanation drawing upon ethologist Frans de Waal's 'trinity' if you will, with respect to the evolutionary and adaptive nature of human morality. He writes...

*"First is the condition of the group value; second is mutual aid and third is internal conflict."*<sup>54</sup>

There is a somewhat veiled but unmistakable reference in the preceding quote, to the assumption that the survival of any Community [and for purposes previously stated, reference is here made to the Diocese of Jamaica and the Cayman Islands], is largely dependent on its ability to facilitate and positively impact in their quest for meaning and purpose in life, those smaller groups that may be considered subsets of the larger whole. To achieve this, it is my contention that the Community as a whole, supported by specially trained and commissioned individuals from within, would provide the moral, spiritual and in some respects physical support to [younger] members, that would in effect be like the provision of a *safety net* that allows for their explorations and in some instances the necessary experimentations that carry with them, increasing levels of risk taking. Engaging these actions and activities however, in light of the support given, should prove neither prove detrimental to nor negatively impact the evolving understanding of the place and role of an individual or group, within the Community and by extension, the vocation they are seeking to discern.

Linked to the *safety net* image therefore, is the concept of *mutuality*. This in essence is the Community striving to become a corporate body in which it is possible for individuals, of differing generations, to experience being/growing together in a fulfilling

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<sup>54</sup> Pg.45 The Redemptive Self

and reciprocal way. In other words, a Community in which support is given and received with the objective of engendering a positive sense of self and belonging. To be sure, the reality of such a Community gives further credence to possibilities that inhere in the Community of the Faithful image. For the sake of argument, in situations of personal conflicts and challenges, particularly those linked to an emerging understanding of the self in relation to spiritual and social awakening and responsibilities, *safety nets* are also akin to *cushions*. In other words, they act, where new and different *experiments* are being undertaken, to shield those engaged therein from consequences that may in some instances be harmful; they provide much needed support in those instances and consequently, are able to positively impact ultimate outcomes.

The point being argued here is that to be enveloped in and by a supportive Community, aids an individual's ability to transcend challenges as well as fears. Such a Community acts to insulate the individual against the kinds of negative repercussions from which it may be difficult or worse, impossible to escape. The concept of *mutuality* then, as a further explanation of what it means to be not only the Community of the baptized but also a baptizing Community, paints the picture of an environment that provides even as it generates a dynamic atmosphere, in which it is possible to move beyond merely existing to actually thriving. Such an atmosphere engenders a sense of belonging and even further, enables the drive towards the acquisition of values that are holistic and in that regard, life enhancing.

Contemplating both the historical and current climate of the Diocese, in which generational differences and divisions are patently obvious and where even the mention of a more inclusive way is sometimes met with suspicion, application of de Waal's

*'Trinitarian'* formula, seems a reasonable way of creating, at least as a first response, the kind of Community and spiritual space described above, characteristics of which are *mutual listening and sharing*.

To further clarify the preceding, it will be necessary to engage a more detailed analysis of theological and social science assumptions and understandings that have informed the content of the thesis being advanced. This will hopefully be engaged in a manner that is respectful of the backgrounds against which they have been raised but with due regard to the context[s] within which they are being applied.

Theological Foundations/Assumptions:

The image of a united body, in which members (young and old) are nurtured and encouraged towards spiritual maturity, is raised up by Paul in the letters he wrote to the Churches in Rome and Corinth.<sup>55</sup> What the apostle seems at pains to describe for his readers is a Community upheld by, even as it works towards fully embracing a spirit of mutuality, anchored in its theology of Baptism that is foundational to its being. In other words, it is in and by Baptism that the place and role of individual members and by extension, the Community itself, is made authentic.

Germane to the Baptismal theology as it is expressed in Anglican spirituality, is a transformational imperative conveyed in words taken from the Lord's Prayer viz. "*Thy Kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven*"<sup>56</sup>. That the prayer itself was outlined by Jesus in response to His disciples request to be taught how to pray, has become a staple of the Catholic faith, not just as a single prayer but the template of a life principle and way of

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<sup>55</sup> Romans 12: 4, 5 cf. I Corinthians 12: 25 - 27

<sup>56</sup> Matthew 6:10

relating to God, speaks to the unifying nature of that which it proclaims. Furthermore, it espouses a theology and way of being that places God at the very core of humankind's and hence the believing Community's existence. To frame it simplistically, one might unequivocally affirm there to be no individual or Community, claiming to be an authentic representative of the Christian faith, that is able to fulfill such a vocation without due deference to God as the ground of its being. To have therefore, and acknowledge the Divine as the center of all that is, at both the cognitive and affective levels, is in effect to affirm a unique sense of belonging...together and to God; for, as the italicized words from a line in the prayer imply, the oneness and unity that exists within the heavenly sphere is the blueprint, the prototype as it were, from which the relationship[s] between and among individual members of the earthly body, ought to take its cue. There is therefore, no escaping or even circumventing the reality that being a part of such a Community, initiates the kind of spiritual transformation that has far reaching social implications realized in a life-long process of being and becoming, that cannot be determined solely on the basis of chronological maturity.

That the transformation described in the preceding paragraphs does not happen by chance, and raises the issue of intentionality in setting the stage for and engaging those entities that facilitate its engagement and therewith, generate commitment to the mission enterprise, beginning with recognition of the supreme value of every member within the Community. In his seminal work *Practical Theology* (2008), Richard Osmer suggests a way of engagement within the faith Community that deals with the issue of transformation in a manner that bespeaks transparency in according due respect to

stakeholders. To that end, he identifies four (4) Core Tasks of Practical Theological Interpretation viz.

- The *descriptive-empirical* task
- The *interpretive* task
- The *normative* task
- The *pragmatic* task

We will return to these tasks later, in order to have a closer look at how they speak to and may be engaged to provide greater clarity to the hypothesis.

In her contribution to the edited work *Greenhouses of Hope*, Sinai Chung<sup>57</sup> shares stories of her encounters with members of Choong-Suh Korean Presbyterian Church. This is a congregation that has been able to successfully bridge the generation gap, and create a faith Community in which mutuality, in seeking the highest individual and corporate good has become a distinguishing hallmark of its existence and continuing impact on the surrounding culture. What is both interesting and instructive in terms of the relationship between members of this unique congregation, given the different generations (viz. first generation Koreans as distinctively different from second generation Korean-Americans) and the variety of ways in which each gives expression to those values and cultural habits that inform their respective worldviews, is the manner in which differences and variety have been embraced as opportunities for enabling rather than obstacles for preventing the celebration of the spirit of Community.<sup>58</sup> As it has been described by Chung, it is this familial atmosphere more than anything else that has become the bedrock of their life

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<sup>57</sup> Sinai Chung, *Greenhouses of Hope*; chapter 3 Loc. 957

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.* Loc. 958

together in Community. What is clearly reflected in their united existence is a community in which content, context<sup>59</sup> and related entities are allowed to communicate intentionality in relation to the desired unity. Based on Chung's observations and analysis of that experienced, this congregation, has internalized the metaphor of a Community of the baptized in practical ways and as a result, has internalized the image of unified togetherness that was the Apostle Paul's vision and objective for the fledgling churches he sought to encourage through his letters. It seems obvious that the relationships established and maintained, demonstrated in a lifestyle marked by compassionate care, to which Chung refers, using the unique term *Mozying*,<sup>60</sup> provides a vivid sketch of the pre-eminent role of *mutuality* in creating not just a Community of the baptized but living in a manner that assumes responsibility for becoming a baptizing Community.

The term *Mozying* as Chung defines it, refers to the practice within Korean culture, of sibling care<sup>61</sup> and alludes to mentoring that has an objective of enabling that which is described as a blessed closeness and strong bond with one another.<sup>62</sup> Given the fact that the congregation sees itself as one big family, it operates, guided by the motto: "*A community where the first and the next generation grow together*"<sup>63</sup> and is built upon, among other pillars, the practice of inclusion.

As this juncture, I believe it is in order to advance the view that while Chung's experiences, observations and related analyses are all related to one congregation, they have contributed significantly to the body of knowledge with respect to praxis in relation

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<sup>59</sup> Pg. xviii-xix Pathways to the Waters of Grace

<sup>60</sup> Loc. 959 Greenhouses of Hope

<sup>61</sup> Ibid loc. 960

<sup>62</sup> Ibid loc. 1009

<sup>63</sup> Ibid loc. 1014

to faith Communities and consequently, may be applied, with modifications, to larger entities e.g. Diocesan bodies, possessing potential for becoming *Greenhouses of Hope*, where possibilities for generating new and renewed life are recognized and exploited.

The concept of *mozying* would not necessarily be regarded as *foreign* in the Diocese of Jamaica and the Cayman Islands given the fact that within Caribbean social structures, the notion of the extended family is one with which most if not all peoples can readily identify. Application of the concept and related images therefore, provides a realistic challenge to the Jamaican Diocese, relative to the praxis assumed in a theology of inclusion. The presumed inability of said Diocese in recent decades, to positively impact and so influence younger generations towards becoming active participants in its mission and ministry, point to the need for a new or perhaps modified mission hermeneutic, one that is neither time-bound nor bereft of defining parameters.

While the background to the thesis and text of his Prophetic Imagination<sup>64</sup> is in response to a subject matter distinctively different from that being here discussed, views expressed by Walter Brueggemann, with regard to the imperative of *prophetic imagination*<sup>65</sup> in relation to a faith Community's evolving, are in fact instructive. In other words, that being espoused is a shift in paradigm that facilitates that unique brand of imagining becoming a tool for envisioning and thereby enacting alternatives to traditional ways of being a faith Community. The concept of *mozying* defined earlier, therefore, when applied imaginatively, offers a peek into the future of the Diocese of Jamaica and the Cayman Islands with respect to the importance of mutuality and the dynamic interplay of

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<sup>64</sup> Walter Brueggemann (2<sup>nd</sup>. ed.) pg. 5

<sup>65</sup> Ibid pg. 39

the contributions made by divergent generations to its discipleship methodology that can in fact inject a measure of hope for the future.

What Brueggemann seems to be suggesting, relative to the Jamaica Diocese, is a systematic methodology that engages both theological and socio-cultural reasoning in order to highlight the differences between old and new models of engagement and the perceived non-impact of the former on present day reality. In doing so, he alludes to the fact that continued application of older models of prophetic engagement will not only prove ineffective, they will continue to fail in their bid to offer liberating alternatives within the socio-cultural and inter-generational matrix that inform current mission needs and emerging trends. This is solid advice that ought to be heeded by the Church, and should in fact commence with a process of (re-)imagining that which is possible as a starting point towards the objective of breaking free of customs and practices that preclude more modern ways of being a faith Community that reaches out to invite and is perceived as being inviting.

What in reality then, would a process of acting upon Brueggemann's suggestion mean? To be sure, it would require a level of prophetic criticism<sup>66</sup> that is generative in its ability to look backwards and forwards at the same time. As Brueggemann suggests, this will require engaging questions of *imaginability* over and above viability;<sup>67</sup> it will require a level of grit in looking beyond a managed future to perceive outcomes that are inextricably linked to visions, as well as the faith and courage required to actualize them (cf. Hebrews 11:1). Prophetic Criticism in the case of the Diocese of Jamaica and the

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid pg. 39

<sup>67</sup> Ibid pg. 39



Cayman Islands and the *lively, energetic discipleship* it envisions will of necessity require mindful<sup>68</sup> contemplation on the part of the leadership – ordained and non-ordained – that will lead to actions favoring Community in an all-encompassing way. One such action could be a version of that embraced by the Church of England, in its Emerging and Fresh Expressions of Church movement,<sup>69</sup> which is a contemporary of the Emerging Church concept<sup>70</sup> in North America.

The United Kingdom's Fresh Expressions of Church engaged something akin to a SWOT analysis that informed the manner in which that which was envisioned, would be both imagined and engaged. Integral to the analysis and that which emerged as a result, one could assume a Church of England awakened and challenged towards engaging a process of reframing its understanding of and hence the manner in which it sought to be...Church. Whether it is controlled environment or open ended spiritual Community,<sup>71</sup> the difference being in the latter's engagement with post-modernity.<sup>72</sup> The theological model underpinning this particular movement is in essence contextual; it facilitates conversation between the prevailing cultures and the Christian faith<sup>73</sup> with a view to aiding understanding and (hopefully) forging new and life enhancing partnerships between both. What seems certain is that for deep understanding and synergy to develop, changes required cannot be cosmetic and as such cannot affirm the one i.e. traditional identity at the expense of the other i.e. cultural identity and awareness<sup>74</sup> and vice versa.

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<sup>68</sup> Makrina Weiderker; Seven Sacred Pauses

<sup>69</sup> <https://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2014/may/fresh-expressions-of-church-in-united-kingdom.html>

<sup>70</sup> <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2007/february/11.35.html>

<sup>71</sup> Emerging and Fresh Expressions of Church pg. 23ff.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid pg. 27

<sup>73</sup> Ibid pg. 28

<sup>74</sup> Ibid pg. 29

The mandate of the Great Commission<sup>75</sup> for example, assumes continued wrestling with the desire and vision of holding both extremes in balance and therewith easily finding, at times eking out ways that foster the measure of give and take necessary for peaceful and mutually satisfying co-existence.

The most recent population census,<sup>76</sup> detailing demographic changes in relation to the Anglican Church in Jamaica highlight a trend in which more and more persons falling within the age groups 18 – 35 years, are exercising a preference for taking flight from traditional churches rather than fighting to gain acceptance therein; by so doing, they are challenging both the relevance and practicability of the Church’s discipleship and missionary operations. The data indicates for example, a major fall off in Anglican membership in both urban and rural centers where the Church once had a commanding presence and influence. This rather disheartening statistic has been previously noted in an in-house survey commissioned in 2012 by the Diocese’s division of training (Department of Mission and Ministry), findings of which portray the Anglican Church as gradually “*descending into irrelevancy in the minds of many*”<sup>77</sup> (younger) Jamaicans. That conclusion was drawn based on the noticeable exodus of younger (25 – 40 year old) members from congregations across the Diocese and the fact that the median age of the average Anglican parishioner, being 50 years, is 11 years older than that of the overall Church population of Jamaica. The consensus seems therefore, that the Anglican Church is increasingly becoming the “*geriatric*” church in Jamaica. These conclusions and related assertions, sounding a warning bell as they have been, must serve to inform the

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<sup>75</sup> Matthew 28:18ff.

<sup>76</sup> Excerpted from a presentation made to the 2016 Diocesan Synod by Dr. Valerie Nam, past Director of the Statistical Institute of Jamaica

<sup>77</sup> Pg. 8 Preliminary Report Survey

Diocese's missionary strategy in ways that are at one and the same time theologically sound and practical. They also point to an observation, based on views expressed by Pamela Couture<sup>78</sup> who suggests there is often too much of an observable dissonance between the Church's articulated theology and its behavioral and organizational practice.

Although Couture's research is with specific reference to the United Methodist Church in the United States, there is a sense in which the close [historical] associations between Anglicanism and Methodism can provide reasonable grounds for drawing parallels. A significant inference to be made therefore, based on Couture's findings is that practical theology requires the kind of engagement that is far more than verbal pronouncements, no matter how erudite. The reality of the current social and cultural milieu confronting the Diocese of Jamaica, *begs* or perhaps a more precise verb would be *demand*s on-going conversations between articulated theological positions, habits and practices that are being allowed to fossilize, because there is no intentional and/or sustained efforts to evaluate their effectiveness and thereby, adjust and/or modify them in order to prevent them morphing into entrenched patterns of behavior.<sup>79</sup>

In *Emerging and Fresh Expressions of Church* (2007), Mobsby raises the issue of a phenomenon he describes as *new forms of spirituality*.<sup>80</sup> He outlines there, an approach to spirituality that is constantly seeking an authentic narrative from which a personal sense of meaning can be derived. Such constancy in seeking he opines, results from rejection of an inherited story and issues in the resulting disconnect between individual and community, with little hope of reengagement and renewal, outside of deliberate and

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<sup>78</sup>Church Identity and Change (ed.) pg. 565

<sup>79</sup> Ibid pg. 566

<sup>80</sup> Emerging and Fresh expressions...pg. 40 - 41

intentional efforts to bridge existing gaps. If the theological moorings of the Church is to be encapsulated in the Oneness of God, then that Church ought in practice, to reflect the same and so fulfill its mandate and purpose by enabling members and seekers alike to experience unity amidst diversity, as a defining characteristic and principle of their shared existence. Consequent on the preceding, it is fitting at this point to return to the Practical Theological Interpretation and processes mentioned earlier.

The philosophy undergirding this thesis, has a measure of congruence with that behind the Practical Theological Interpretation presumed to be the guiding principle that motivated architects of the *Fresh Expressions* movements that have been emerging in various regions and dioceses within the Anglican world. Practical Theological Interpretation and the processes aligned to it, underscore the fact that the understandings, values and metaphors, embedded in scientific and theological arguments<sup>81</sup> are not only for making pronouncements and verbalizing theological beliefs. This unique interpretation begs a process of unpacking that will have the effect of facilitating greater understandings of God. It will also engender the relationships between and among groups within the *Faith Community* and beyond, whose understanding of their relationship with the ground of their being, is greatly enhanced by the ability to share stories, compare and contrast experiences and thereby, eke out a way of being Community that adds richness to the totality of the experience.

To be sure, my own excursions, facilitated by Virginia Theological Seminary, into such areas of study and reflection as the *Dynamics of Conflict and Change* and to a lesser degree, *Family Systems* in addition to the disciplines of studying and analysing cases

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<sup>81</sup> Pg. 566 Church, Identity and Change

related to various ministry contexts, have served to provide new lenses from which to view the current Diocesan situation pertaining to missing generations from congregations as well as to inspire a broader and more inclusive understanding of *Community* that the Church must seek at all times to advance and project. In other words, while earlier theologizing would have been defined and honed based on a certain fixation with that which was impaired [and needing corrective work], the theological praxis that keeps recurring, speaks to the need for giving focus to newer approaches that would, like small stones cast on the deep waters of the ocean, produce ripples that make the larger body of water aware of its presence.

The preceding assumes a micro approach to leadership that has potential for engaging small groups and units, to facilitate manageability in an ever expanding way. James Rutland Wood (2005)<sup>82</sup> affirmed the inevitability of small but progressive twenty-first century changes within the United Methodist Church that would redefine the role of its leadership and consequently, reshape its identity and refocus its mission. That *prophecy* continues to be fulfilled not only within Methodism but across the entire Christian world. The ever evolving worldview continues to challenge whole groups and individual Christians, living in a postmodern and increasingly secular society, with respect to the credibility of traditional religious beliefs and values. Issues of leadership and relationships within *Community* therefore, which bring into focus questions of authority and organizational control have become in the twenty-first century, the rule rather than the exception.

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<sup>82</sup> Pg. 534 Church Identity and Change

While I am well aware of the fact that such sweeping generalizations do not necessarily tell the entire story, the fact remains that in my own context and experience, change and adaptability are not readily embraced concepts within the leadership echelons of the Church. As a consequence, younger generation[s] remain committed to God even as they *leave Church*<sup>83</sup> as an expression of their inability or perhaps, unwillingness to relate to archaic ways that tend to preclude or circumvent the difficult issues and conversations with respect to other possibilities they would like to have entertained. In some instances therefore, there are moral and theological reasons undergirding the rejection as it were, of the institution.

There remain, therefore, two main areas in which the preceding arguments, rooted and grounded in practical theology, speak eloquently to the situation under review, viz. a viz. The Diocese of Jamaica and the Cayman Islands and these are set out hereunder.

1. The Church and liberation: A significant role of the Church through its leaders is to engage members toward re-acquaintance with and hence reinterpretation of both its theology and traditions. This re-acquaintance will hopefully facilitate renewed acceptance of the dynamic nature of traditions and foster re-interpretation viz. a hermeneutic that affirms principles of liberation while providing the framework for engaging those who feel they have been cast to the side lines, in finding and asserting their voice. To be sure, the facility of *prophetic imagining* will become an indispensable tool in the process. The ability to imagine possibilities within a liberation methodology requires affirmation of the ultimate authority and dynamism of a Community in which principles

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<sup>83</sup> Separate themselves physically from the institutionalized form

embodying the concept of *enculturation* become a priority of the shared experience. Throughout Christian history, the Church has been tasked with facilitating the movement of God's people from one form of bondage or slavery, into the freedom for which they were created. The ability to engage each other, in a manner that reveals the liberating power of togetherness, remains this Diocese's challenge.

2. **The Church and Adaptability:** Exercising adaptive leadership is radically different from doing your job really, really well;<sup>84</sup> in fact it may be safe to conclude that adaptive leadership assumes a willing readiness to persevere, particularly in situations of extreme challenge, when a default position that keeps one in a zone or zones of comfort is easier to adopt. Adaptive leadership, therefore, is an affirmation of individual and collective growth that embraces collaboration as a necessary step, en-route to that objective. The Adaptive Church must constantly engage the question...what is going on? In so doing, it sets the stage for analysing the prevailing culture[s] in order to unearth solutions that are germane to the wellbeing of all. The Adaptive Church is prepared to challenge its own self-understanding which includes enabling the enlightenment of those with and among whom it exercises ministries that are of a liberation bent. This is by no means an easy characteristic to embrace and yet, given the levels of cynicism with regard to the role and function of the Church in an increasingly secular environment, ability to adapt in order to enable others in actualizing their own potentials, cannot be an option.

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<sup>84</sup> Pg. 23 the Practice of Adaptive Leadership (Heifetz et-al)

## Social Science Foundations/Assumptions:

The fact that the Diocese of Jamaica and the Cayman Islands is in a (re)visioning phase (2014 – 2019) and the Diocesan Bishop's preferred mantra "*it can't be business as usual,*" point to a desire for change that ought to be all pervading. The *disruptive* nature of the change, however, is yet to be fully appreciated by many and may very well be at the heart of the perceived resistance.

That a vision statement has been affirmed along with a visioning prayer, one line of which declares... '*save us from unnecessary distractions,*' should have been an indication of preparedness at the very least, by the Diocesan leadership, to find and engage new and different methodologies, en route to the goal of an *enlivened church committed to the discipleship of its members and the wider society*<sup>85</sup>.

Since the beginning of the process, however, it seems that while local congregations have been constantly reminded about the need for, and to some degree, are preparing plans of action commensurate with the stated vision, the same cannot be honestly said of Diocesan boards and departments. In fact, it would seem that while at one level directives are issued to congregations, there is a presumption that such directives do not apply to governing boards and councils.

In his article on the Reformed Church in America, Steve Mathonnet-Vander-Well<sup>86</sup> alludes to the fact that mission statements provide the means by which (*traditional*) churches are forced to engage their theologies through new and different lenses even as they examine attitudes towards structures and constitutional documents. He makes the

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<sup>85</sup> Diocesan Vision Statement

<sup>86</sup> Article in: Church, Identity and Change: Roozen, D. & Nieman, R. (Eds.) 2005



point that the very presence of a mission statement may be an admission of frustration with the way things were and a pointing to the need for new and fresh expressions [of church]. Such expressions, I believe, are not limited to congregations but must include leadership and governance entities tasked with providing inspiration for imagining the new rather than providing justification[s] for what has always been.

Katherine Tyler Scott's<sup>87</sup> affirmation of the importance of understanding the complexities involved in shifting paradigms, when making the decision for immediate resolution or prioritization, is timely. She points to the fact and quite correctly, that in times of uncertainty, when change is desired but familiarity offers safety, avoidance of a thorough understanding and hence respectful wrestling with the inherent nuances of change, is tantamount to a dismissal of the creative energies, from which new life may be birthed. Her affirmation of *paradox as a gift*<sup>88</sup> that enables successful navigation towards change, without succumbing to disabling fear, is worthy of note.

It is Tyler Scott's *gift of paradox*, if you will, that offers a formidable yet achievable challenge to the Diocese of Jamaica, with respect to adjustments in mindset and methodology related to change. The need for change ought to be welcomed, particularly by those in positions of leadership, in order to facilitate the responsible embrace of uncertainty as fertile ground for the advancements envisioned in its Vision statement. In the Message translation's rendering of Luke 5:32 Jesus, in his response to the whispers of certain members of the Jewish elite, concerning his association with those considered outcasts, declared...

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<sup>87</sup> Transforming Leadership pg. 56

<sup>88</sup> Transforming Leadership pg. 58

*“Who needs a doctor: the healthy or the sick? I’m here inviting outsiders, not insiders—  
an invitation to a changed life, changed inside and out.”*

The above quotation understood within the context of the social implications of The Great Commission recorded in Matthew 28: 18ff, allude to the fact that the mission of the Church is to proclaim Good News to all, regardless of their social circumstances or the generation to which they belong. As a consequence, one systemic change that should be both embraced and engaged by the Church as the body of Christ in the exercise of its mission is that which pushes away from the tendency towards social exclusivism.

That there are certain values and virtues germane to the Community metaphor is undeniable. That fact notwithstanding, the approach to mission exemplified by Jesus Christ is one that also welcomes and nurtures into the Community, those whose knowledge of its protocols are non-existent as well as those who challenge its modus operandi. The notion that all are welcome and can be facilitated and helped towards a values oriented lifestyle, therefore, remains a primary objective. In other words, the Church should operate along a system that encourages and facilitates growth in social networks and related virtues by creating the space within which all may experience authentic partnerships and true Community.

There is a sense in which the experienced culture within many congregations of the Diocese assumes a full-fledged member to be someone of a certain chronological and in some respects, social stature. As a consequence, that which has evolved seems very much like an exclusive *club* in which only those of a certain ilk who have passed the covert screening, can reasonably find a place. According to Heifetz et-al (2009) every

organization has default interpretations influencing its modus operandi; this fact must be borne in mind as transformational leadership and re-interpretation of traditional cultures within the faith Community are engaged. Here, and if the concept of *enculturation* is borne in mind, encouraging diversity of opinions, rather than generating hostility and censure, can create opportunities for dialogue i.e. the building of bridges of understanding, respect and reconciliation. The courage and determination needed are not instantaneous; they are the result of the gradual outworking of an *Adaptive Culture* two significant characteristics of which are...

1. shared responsibility for the community's successes and failings and
2. mandatory continuing education and learning

These characteristics form the axis as it were, upon which all action and responses are made to turn, allowing the Community and individual members thereof to own and accept responsibility for its continued positive growth in faith, hope and love. By being adaptive, the Community not only becomes conscious of its unique characteristics but, being aware of those external factors influencing and affecting these, it adapts its modus operandi to ensure congruence and consistency in both its proclamation and praxis.

I would like at this point to return to the core tasks of Practical Theological Interpretation posited by Osmer<sup>89</sup> but will analyze them from the perspective of their social impact viz. how engagement of these tasks benefits the Community as it is and influences what it can become. The tasks<sup>90</sup> as they are outlined are...

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<sup>89</sup> Practical Theology: pg.4ff.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid pp. 4-11

- The descriptive empirical task: an invitation to gather information and data that will help to clarify that which is being experienced.
- The interpretive task: an invitation to employ various theories in interpreting the gathered information.
- The normative task: an invitation to ground the gathered information theologically and so be guided in responding in principled practice towards the highest good.
- The pragmatic task: an invitation to take into consideration, the findings of previous tasks, especially that at the normative level, in setting forth the path and strategy to be followed.

While these four tasks speak to the practical application of theological concepts, it is my view that because the goal towards which they work centers on the wellbeing and welfare of Community, their social implications ought not to be overlooked. It is for this reason that I would suggest that at a basic level they address socio-cultural realities and the manner in which theology is applied to these, in an attempt to generate reconciled unity amidst diversity.

Parker Palmer (1981) provides an excellent starting point for this particular aspect of the discussion in the following words that create an unmistakable image. “When people look upon the Church, it is not of first importance that they be instructed by our theology or altered by our ethics but that they are moved by the quality of our life together: *See how they love one another.*”<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> The Company of Strangers: Pg. 134

The above quotation may be interpreted in several ways but for the purpose of the thesis being here advanced and given the socio-cultural and religious context to which it will hopefully be applied, there is a particular interpretation that is difficult to escape and it is this...

By virtue of its low rating among many Jamaicans, particularly among the younger generations, the Anglican Church is tasked, even before it actively pursues engagement of the same, with beginning a process of thinking in *descriptive empirical* terms. In other words, the Diocese will not be able to pull itself from the vortex of negativity surrounding its being and set itself on a path to the newness of life, implied in its vision, apart from the deliberate and intentional decision to set aside the *resting on historical laurels* in order to take soundings regarding the reasons for its current low social image and ranking. It is the pursuit of this deliberate, intentional decision that will reveal the further need to employ the vast store of historical and theological resources at its disposal in interpreting that which the empirical investigations will reveal. Again, Palmer's words offer insight...

“To understand the Church as Community in our time, we must ask what image of the larger society animates us.”<sup>92</sup>

The image of the larger society in this context is one in which there is a so much of social unrest and the reality of an increasing disconnect with systems meant to uphold justice but seem in large part to favor a certain minority. As Walter Earl Fluker suggests, it is a society in which the collision of incompatible worlds is evidenced in the seeming

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<sup>92</sup> The Company of Strangers: Pg. 135

disintegration of formerly stable institutions<sup>93</sup> and where as a consequence, up and coming generations refuse to embrace those institutions and their traditions unquestioningly. This then is the image that challenges even as it invites the *interpretive task* of seeking to understand patterns of behavior. It invites the Diocese, in employing theories and principles of psycho-social analysis with regard to its own response/reaction to the prevailing cultures to honestly assess whether or not its proclamations align with its way of being and the possible ways in which it may have contributed to the sense of alienation being experienced within and without.

Applying the *normative task* then, follows closely on the interpretive, challenging the Church, within that social context of incompatible worlds and institutional disintegration to find the means necessary to regain its socio-political moorings. It is here in this aspect of the process towards *lively and energetic discipleship*, that by intentional and deliberate acts of ministry anchored in its theology of Baptism and hence its ethic of inclusion, the Diocese must begin to put the various pieces of the puzzle together so that the unfolding picture of the Community, is bound in its diversity by the unconditional love which is a divine gift and enables the unity that is a unique characteristic of its diversity.

The final and *pragmatic task* as its name suggests then, can and will facilitate an honest setting forth of the path towards healing and reconciliation, between and among generations via an embracing of the unique qualities of each, as the means by which the missionary endeavor will be applied in strategic ways. Engaging this task must also take cognizance of the all important aspect of action-reflection, without which the entire process would perhaps be flawed and as a consequence, become another exercise in time

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<sup>93</sup> Ethical Leadership pg.10ff

wasted. It is therefore, by strategic planning and process, inclusive of continued [openness to] discernment, that momentum will be created towards the visionary goal of *energetic and joyful discipleship of members at all levels and of all ages...to being an assertive influence for good on society*<sup>94</sup>.

The preceding *conversations* with theological and social science theories and assumptions have highlighted three imperatives which ought to be taken into account as the project aspect of this thesis is engaged. These are...

1. The Imperative of Foundation: the centrality of the theology of Baptism to the Church being a Community of the Faithful.
2. The Imperative of Formation: valuing the experiences, questions and concerns of the target group viz. a viz. the Church as a Community of the Baptized and Baptizing Community.
3. The Imperative of Function: the importance of corporate listening and sensitive sharing in discerning vocation.

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<sup>94</sup> Excerpted from the Diocesan Vision Statement

## CHAPTER IV

### “Enabling the Enablers”

#### *Piloting a Discernment Process for Potential Congregational Mentors*

As a result of its erstwhile position, being at the vanguard of leadership in Jamaica’s evolving as a politically independent nation, the Anglican Church has left an indelible mark on the nation’s educational and social landscape:<sup>95</sup> an achievement of which it may be justly proud. Having founded a significant number of the nation’s traditional\* high schools (\*reminiscent of British grammar schools), in addition to providing land for and thereby entering into social partnership with governing bodies, for the provision of primary education particularly in rural communities, the Anglican Church in Jamaica is arguably, one of the few Christian institutions that has intentionally engaged the mandate of the Great Commission in a manner consistent with the declaration made by Jesus in Luke 4: 18 – 19. As a consequence, its contributions to the liberation of the descendants of slaves and hence the realization of the vision, articulated in the Country’s motto, anthem and pledge,<sup>96</sup> have been documented for posterity.

The preceding notwithstanding, there is perhaps an unfortunate sense in which this same Church that in decades past, was instrumental in a people’s liberation and the creation of clearly defined pathways to more than political independence, has found itself caught in something of a time warp, a consequence of which is the perceived inertia that manifests itself as the seeming inability to relate to and thereby, positively impact current and emerging generations of Jamaicans.

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<sup>95</sup> The 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Diocese of Jamaica (A Commemorative Magazine; Published by the Church in Jamaica (1974)

<sup>96</sup> [http://www.jnht.com/fast\\_facts\\_national\\_atthem\\_pledge\\_song.php](http://www.jnht.com/fast_facts_national_atthem_pledge_song.php)



Clear to the discerning eye are visible evidences of disconnect between the Anglican Church in Jamaica and persons within the 18 – 35 age groups. That which is observed in their physical absence from congregations and verbally expressed dissatisfaction, provides evidence of their disquiet and gives credence to their refusal to accept what for many of them remains the rigid and inflexible nature of Anglican practice which includes but is not limited to forms of worship.

In the population census of 2011<sup>97</sup>, figures for membership within the diocese of Jamaica highlighted consistent negative growth between the years 2001 - 2011. In fact, whereas non-traditional denominations e.g. Pentecostals and Seventh Day Adventists registered significant numerical increase over the same period viz. 19.29 % and 14.53 % respectively, the number of Anglicans declined by some 20%. Based on these figures<sup>98</sup>, it seems fair to assume that among Anglicans, as far as numerical growth is concerned, those missing cohorts of younger generations may yet be related to the observable decline and downward trajectory with respect to Anglican presence and influence implied in the census data. This grim reality is further compounded by the fact that increased absence of persons from these younger cohorts of (potential) members, suggests an aging membership with no immediately visible signs of a reversal in the trend.

Although the foregoing challenges are mirrored to greater or lesser degrees in other traditional denominations, the fact remains for the Anglican Church that its vitality, viability and visibility, in an age of rapid change, rests by and large in its ability to re-assess the methods it employs, both internally and externally, in engaging its mission of

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<sup>97</sup>Excerpted from a presentation to the annual synod of the Diocese of Jamaica (2016) by Dr. Valerie Nam: Immediate Past Director of the Statistical Institute of Jamaica

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

being a purveyor of Good News [Gospel]. It is via the intentional engagement of such a process of re-assessment and re-visioning that the whole Church including boards, commissions and individual members thereof will be enabled to embrace and thereby affirm a theology of leadership that is at heart transformational and thereby, capable of making the positive moral and social impact upon the nation[s], for which it was known in a bygone era.

In his rather insightful work, Charles Foster argues that if the objective[s] of faith formation in younger generations is to be met, catechetical cultures that are *lively, ecclesiastically grounded and educationally imaginative*<sup>99</sup> must be created. In other words, if the Diocesan vision of “lively, energetic discipleship” is to be achieved, then intentional and sustained application of Christian Formation and Discernment processes, grounded in a theology that ultimately encapsulates aspects of the theology of liberation, informed by the prevailing circumstances and cultures of current and anticipated members, must become its primary *raison d’etre*.

In advancing his *Styles of Faith Development*, John Westerhoff raises questions about that which promotes change and growth in an individual. He argues that while *religious socialization*<sup>100</sup> seeks to pass on normative values in a manner that may be described as passive: focused solely on the transmission of information, *social enculturation* provides opportunities for engaging the culture in ways that are respectful of the learners’ ability to interact with their environment and as such, facilitates shaping/fashioning learning experiences to facilitate active participation in one’s own learning and transformation.

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<sup>99</sup> From Generation to Generation pg. 38ff

<sup>100</sup> Will Our Children Have Faith

It seems prudent at this point to revisit and reiterate a number of previously made observations. For example, in Kimball's "*Wedge*",<sup>101</sup> adaptation, there is a sense in which movement from *experienced* to *affiliative faith* is more or less fluid. In other words, based on a combination of chronological and mental age, the faith response that is arguably typical of children from primary through to the early secondary years of their education, usually reflects the parental and familial influences associated with each unique faith Community. As a consequence, those experienced traditions, are normally accepted as sources of authority. Beyond that, however, where *searching faith* is expected to transition to *owned faith*, i.e. where ultimate questions are clarified, en route to the laying of foundations that transcend blind acceptance, committed leadership, becomes a distinct possibility. When however, conversations and clarifications are neither welcomed nor engaged or worse, when opportunities for raising questions and concerns are met with disinterest and/or indifference, the anticipated transition becomes stymied, often leading to disenchantment and the resulting falling away signifying a severing of ties that may prove difficult in re-establishing. In the final analysis then, it is at that searching (questioning) stage that congregations, depending on how they respond, often begin to experience an exodus among the younger generations of their membership.

The preceding speaks to the urgent need to carefully examine the various elements that contribute to the membership hiatus. What are the causes and contributory factors underlying the relative enthusiasm at the stage of affiliation to begin to fizzle, becoming a bland, unspectacular lack of interest and/or active participation in the life of the Community, the introduction of new programs notwithstanding? It is in response to this

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<sup>101</sup> See Fig. 1 pg.22

rather pertinent question that I proposed a path towards the possibility of a solution. The solution resides in affirmation and engagement of faith formation and vocational discernment processes that can be engaged via the process already described as *Congregational Mentoring*. I would argue further, that *congregational mentors* who have been exposed to and trained in the use of intervention methods, guided by principles of faith development and informed by the concept of *social enculturation* would be able to create opportunities for individual and group discernment among the membership within their congregations, and more precisely those of younger generations.

To this end my proposal of a *sensitization and discernment process* targeting individuals drawn from the 18 – 35 age groups, would provide opportunity for the creation of a cadre of individuals who, would experience firsthand the benefits of being mentored along such a process, and would thereafter, become mentors themselves and facilitators of others in being able to make the transition from *searching* to *owning the faith* and setting the stage for catechesis with practical discipleship and the further embrace of vocational discernment and ultimately...leadership.

The following therefore, outlines the intervention module, aimed at facilitating the process described above. The goal of the process, rooted in a clear understanding and embrace of the Theology of Baptism, proposes enabling potential *Congregational Mentors* to discern and clarify their own unique vocation and as a consequence, commit to the knowledge, experience fortitude necessary, to facilitate a similar process within and among others.

In addition, participants would be taken through a discernment process that would facilitate their ability to provide an honest assessment of their gifts and possible ways in which these could be utilized for maximum benefit within the community and further, whether they were in fact sensing a movement signaling a vocation to leadership at some level within the community.

Project Intervention:

Course Title: Faith Development and Vocational Discernment

Course Description: The course is designed to immerse potential *Congregational Mentors* into the fundamentals of the Theology of Baptism, its role in Faith Development and Vocational Discernment.

Using an eclectic methodology, participants will be introduced to basic elements of the *Theology of Baptism*, its relationship to *Ecclesiology* and *Vocational Discernment*. Participants will be assisted towards making connections with that to which they are being exposed with reference to personal and other experiences. They will be encouraged to engage the content presented in a manner that is able to illuminate and give meaning to their own unique spiritual paths and hence, that of their peers, within the 18 – 35 age cohorts.

Course Overview: Divided into three [3] modules, the course will draw on the work of a number of scholars whose research in the areas of Baptismal Theology and Vocational Discernment is well documented. The first module, will explore the sacrament of

baptism via the lens of Anglicanism [cf. the CPWI<sup>102</sup> Book of Common Prayer] to illuminate connection[s] between baptism and participation in the Community of Faith. Participants will be encouraged to use frames of personal and other experiences, to explore these relationship dynamics and so establish that further link to vocational discernment.

The gift of Discernment upheld by intentional mentoring will be given closer scrutiny, as a pre-requisite to sensing and thereby experiencing vocations [*not confined to ordained service*]. In assuming this approach, it is hoped that the relationship between a nurturing community and possibilities for vocational discernment will become apparent and that participants, having internalized that reality, will be both encouraged and facilitated to inspire a similar response in others.

#### Module I (Weeks: 1-2) Baptism and Ecclesiology

Goal[s]: At the end of this module, participants will: (1) have a clear understanding of the Baptismal Theology outlined in the CPWI Book of Common Prayer (2) demonstrate conversance with it viz. be able to clearly articulate ways in which [any aspect of] the theology serves to clarify the concept *Incorporation into Christ* and by extension *Community of Faith*.

Objective[s]: To explore the essential elements of Christian Baptism as *Incorporation into Christ*, the Church and its relationship to the *Community of Faith* metaphor, by drawing upon the offerings of several scholars, to explain both the historic and current significance of baptism and its relationship to the Church [historically and currently] as *Community of Faith*.

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<sup>102</sup> Church in the Province of the West Indies

Topics:

1. Overview of the history and theology of Baptism
2. Baptism as Incorporation into Christ
3. Baptism and relationships within the Body

Resources:

1. The Anglican Catechism (CPWI)
2. Williams, Rowan: *Being Christian* (2014) SPCK, 36 Causton Street, London
3. Larson-Miller, Lizette & Knowles, Walter (Eds.): *Drenched in Grace* (2013), PICKWICK Publications Eugene, Oregon
4. Batchelder, David B: *Pathways to the Waters of Grace* (2017) WIPF and STOCK Publishers 199W 8<sup>th</sup> Ave., Suite 3, Eugene OR 97401

Module II (Weeks: 3-4) *The Church as Community of Faith*

Goal[s]: On completion of this module, participants will be able to explain the meaning of *Community of Faith* and the significance of the image it portrays in relationship to *Ecclesiology*.

Objective[s] In order to achieve these goals, participants will be assisted in identifying and analyzing aspects of the Baptismal Theology that highlights the imperative of a nurturing and affirming organism as distinctly different from a hierarchical organization.

Topics:

1. Organism versus Organization
2. Community of Faith = Nurturing Community

### 3. Nurturing Community = Enabler of Vocations

Resources:

Batchelder, David B.; *Pathways to the Waters of Grace* (2017) WIPF & STOCK, Eugene Oregon

Module III (Weeks: 5-6) Mentoring towards Vocational Discernment

Goal[s] Participants will be able to: (1) explain the relationship between *Discernment* and *Vocation* (2) Outline the importance of the *Community of Faith* in the catechetical process of *Vocational Discernment* (3) engage in and [positively] respond to a Vocational Discernment retreat process.

Objective[s]: To achieve these goals participants will engage in focused discussion [using pre-prepared questions] on the challenges of faith development and community involvement, being faced by Anglican youth and young adults [18 – 35] today. They will be able to draw on personal experience as well as that of others, to highlight what may be deemed best practices in the discipline[s] of Vocational Discernment. Finally, they will be able to provide credible and cogent explanation[s] underlying the importance of Mentoring and its relationship to Vocational Discernment, especially among the age groups cited above.



Topics:

1. Who is a Congregational Mentor
2. Understanding the Discernment Process
3. Mentoring and Vocational Discernment

Resources:

The Stages of Faith “Wedge” Diagram by Lisa Kimball

Grinenko Baker, Dorie: Green Houses of Hope (2010); Rowman and Littlefield

CHAPTER V  
“Problem or Possibility”

*An Analysis of the Project’s Practicability*

As was mentioned in the previous chapter, a decision was taken to engage a *sensitization and discernment process*, with a sample group of individuals within the age cohorts deemed problematic and drawn from several congregations in the Diocese; this was in effect, a way of testing the credibility of the hypothesis. Also informing the decision was the larger issue of Diocesan Mission, in conjunction with what was perceived as untapped possibilities for bringing it in line with the ideals anticipated in its vision, particularly that which affirms *lively and energetic discipleship* as a non-negotiable imperative. Permission was therefore sought and obtained from the Diocesan Bishop to engage the project under the egis of the Division of Training of which I am the Diocesan Officer in charge.

Having received permission, I outlined my idea for the project to a number of colleagues, explaining my intentions and enlisting their support in selecting the *sample* for testing my hypothesis. The selection process was guided by criteria that were shared with my colleagues which they in turn used to identify and select possible candidates.

Criteria for Selection:

- Men and women between the ages of 18 – 35
- Baptized/confirmed Anglican
- Possessing an engaging personality
- [Demonstrated] capacity for leadership

➤ Questioning Church membership/leadership

Having been advised [by my colleagues] of possible candidates, I wrote to each of those recommended, advising them of the work [studies] in which I was engaged and solicited their support in testing the hypothesis that was at the heart of the project I was hoping to engage.

In summary, the information I shared, indicated that as a consequence of the visible absence from Diocesan congregations, of persons within the age groups 18 – 35 years and drawing on previous research and personal experience, indicating a significant contributor to this *problem* as being a deficiency in Diocesan discipleship and mentoring initiatives and strategies, I was in the process of designing an intervention process with a number of modules that would seek to address themes and issues germane to the topics of discipleship and mentoring that will seek to address the following...

1. Questions from those in the highlighted age range related to the challenge[s] of membership and inspired Church involvement.
2. The gift and process of discernment and its relationship to vocations and leadership within the Church.
3. Mentoring towards Faith Development and Vocational Discernment

Information about the project's duration, content and format [inclusive of a one day *discernment retreat*] was also shared. That project, as it was outlined, would in essence be a three month process [February – April], to be engaged on the first and third Saturdays in each of the months [for no more than three hours each Saturday]. Additionally, the [possible] role of *Congregational Mentors* as a strategy of discipleship,

combined with the hope of steering individuals within the sample group towards the possible discernment of such a vocation, was raised.

There was initial reticence on the part of some of those approached but by and large, the sense that there was nothing to lose [rather than something to gain] in embarking on the proposed journey, won the day. Of twenty [21] persons approached, representing congregations from both rural and urban settings, a total of fourteen [14] agreed to engage the process, with an average attendance at all sessions of eleven [11].

In addition, three [3] persons were invited to engage the process as *listeners*. These were persons outside the sample group whose role in the process would be to carefully observe its out-workings, with a view to providing objective feedback and assessment on the perceived impact of the process on participants within the sample and therewith offer an opinion as to the potential of that experienced and in light of the stated hypothesis, for successful Diocesan implementation. The rationale behind the addition of this dimension viz. including older persons to *listen in* on the process was in an effort to ensure that its modus operandi and potential are observed in a way that would validate the spirit of community being inter-generational. Additionally, their participation would demonstrate the importance of listening as a way of learning for all generations and hopefully, reduce any skepticism on the part of those who may be more willing to endorse/accept the process, based on assessment given by their peers. Those invited included two [2] female, lay leaders and one [1] male cleric. Unfortunately, due to extenuating circumstances, the male cleric was not able to attend any of the sessions. The two remaining *listeners* however, participated fully and, taking seriously that in which they were invited to

participate, provided a succinct yet comprehensive report of their experience, which will be analyzed later in this chapter.

Consequent on the foregoing therefore, *before and after* questionnaires [see Appendix I and II] were administered for the purpose of gathering information on participants, relevant to their status, congregational involvement, knowledge of and conversance with topics such as Baptism and Vocational Discernment. The goal of *before and after* was in order to assess the impact of the process, on the participants' level of understanding as well as their willingness [or otherwise] to engage further [training] encounters aimed at vocational discernment and leadership within the Diocese.

The following table represents responses to the Pre-Process Questionnaire and provides a quantitative assessment of the process.

			<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>		
	Active		5	6		
	Not Active					
	Nominal			1		
<b>Q1</b>	<b>Stage Baptized</b>					
	Infant		3	6		
	Adolescent		2	1		
	Adult					
<b>Q2</b>	<b>Were you helped</b>					
	Yes		2	4		
	No			1		
	Not really		3	2		
<b>Q3</b>	<b>Do you Believe enough being done</b>					

			Male	Female		
	Yes		2			
	No		3	5		
	Not sure		1	1		
<b>Q5</b>	<b>Do you believe church has responsibility</b>					
	Yes		4	6		
	No					
	Not Sure			1		
<b>Q6</b>	<b>Are you aware 18-35 missing</b>					
	Yes		5	7		
	No					
<b>Q7</b>	<b>Some of reasons not attending participating</b>					<b>Multiple reasons possible</b>
	Do not believe			2		
	Service boring		2	6		
	Culture inflexible		3	6		
	Other		1	2		did not state male
<b>Q8</b>	<b>Vocation refers to:</b>					
	Ordained Service			<b>1</b>		
	Any work divinely called		4	5		
	Not sure		1	1		
<b>Q9</b>	<b>Do you think 18-35 would participate more if intentional efforts made</b>					
	Yes		4	6		
	No					
	Not sure		1	1		

			Male	Female		
<b>Q11</b>	<b>Can Mentor facilitate</b>					
	Yes		4	5		
	No					
	Not Sure		1	2		
<b>Q13</b>	<b>Heard of Discernment</b>					
	Yes			4		
	No		2	3		
	Can't recall		3			
<b>Q14</b>	<b>Consideration being taken through Discernment process</b>					<b>1 no answer</b>
	Yes		3	4		
	No					
	Not sure		2	2		
	<b>Appeal of being trained as a Congregational mentor</b>					
<b>Q15</b>	Yes		5	3		
	No					
	Not Sure			4		

The preceding table outlines data in response to a Pre-Process Questionnaire, administered to members of the sample group who participated in the project intervention that contributed to the thesis being advanced. Questions endeavored to ascertain the participants' understanding of what it means to be a member of the [Anglican] Church, implications for leadership and the importance of discerning vocations thereto.

Responses provided relevant information pertinent to the thesis being advanced and can be summarized in the following way...

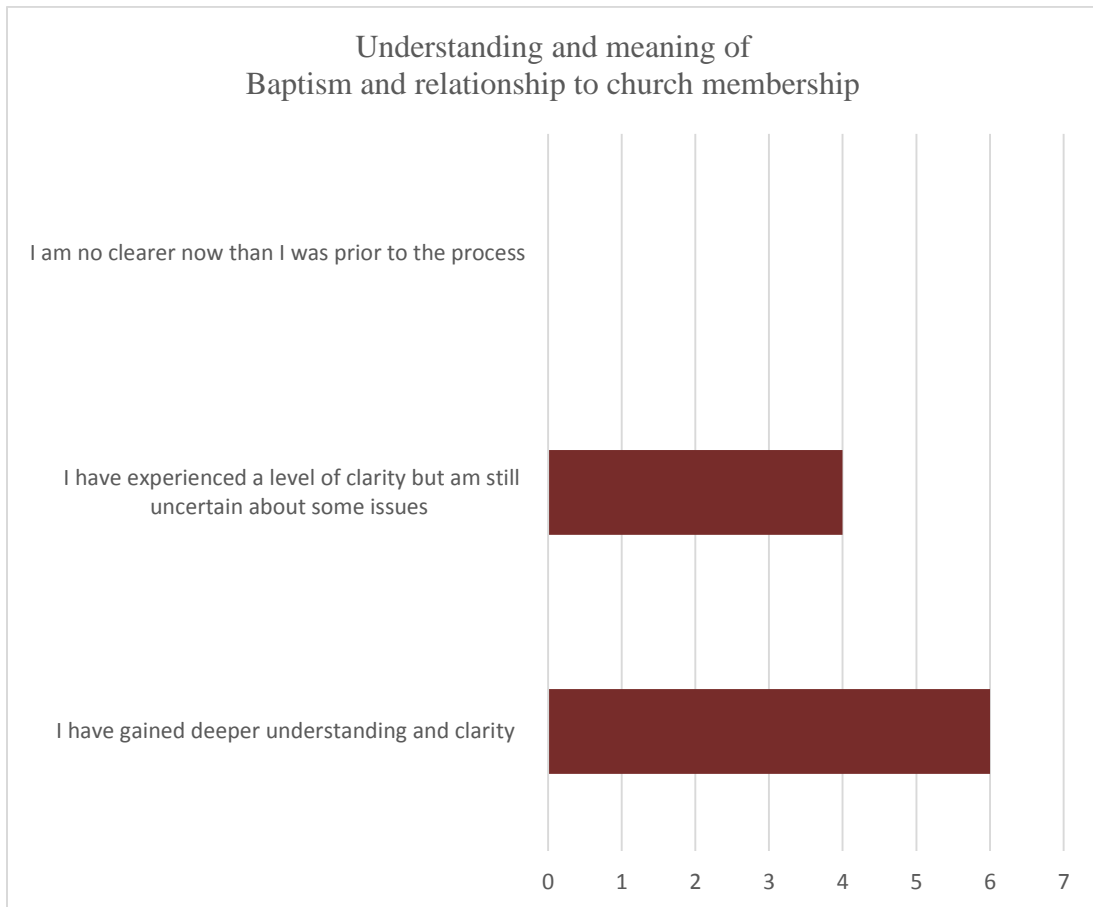
- Most of the participants were baptized as infants and subsequently confirmed
- While they would admit to being given basic spiritual guidance, participants' responses implied that continued spiritual nurture was lacking in their development
- Also to be inferred from the responses is the fact that resulting from the deficiency of continued nurture, which is generally accepted as a responsibility of the Church, while there were a number of factors contributing to the noticeable absence of youth and young adults from congregations within the Diocese, that which appeared most to have impacted that negative outcome was the Church's failure in executing its responsibility and hence, its failure to connect with its young members
- There was something of a balance between uncertainty and knowledge regarding the meaning of vocation [apart from ordained service] and its relationship to mainstream leadership within the Church. The subject of *discernment* seemed also to be one with which participants were not altogether familiar and, while they felt there was a role for mentorship in this regard, uncertainty as to the shape and form such mentorship would take, was also implied.
- The matter of a Discernment Process and responding to a call to become a mentor had equal balance in the responses between an affirmative yes and uncertainty.

In summary, that which seemed a positive thread throughout all the responses remains the fact that while persons expressed uncertainty regarding a number of the questions asked,

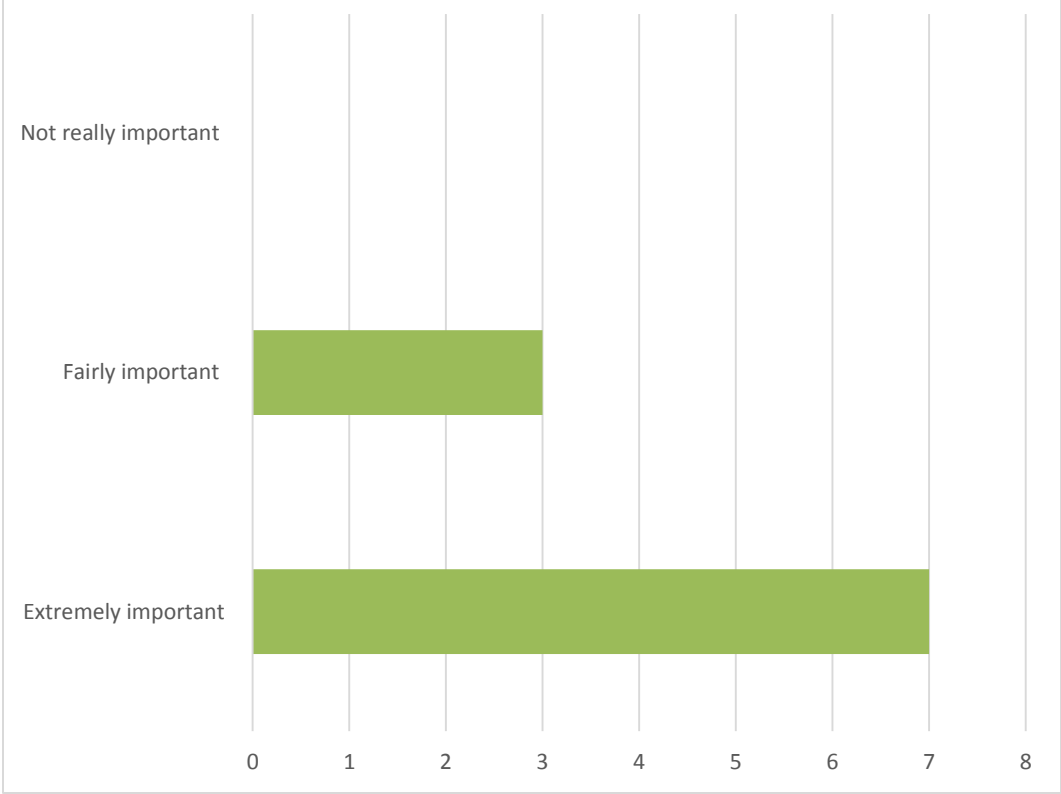


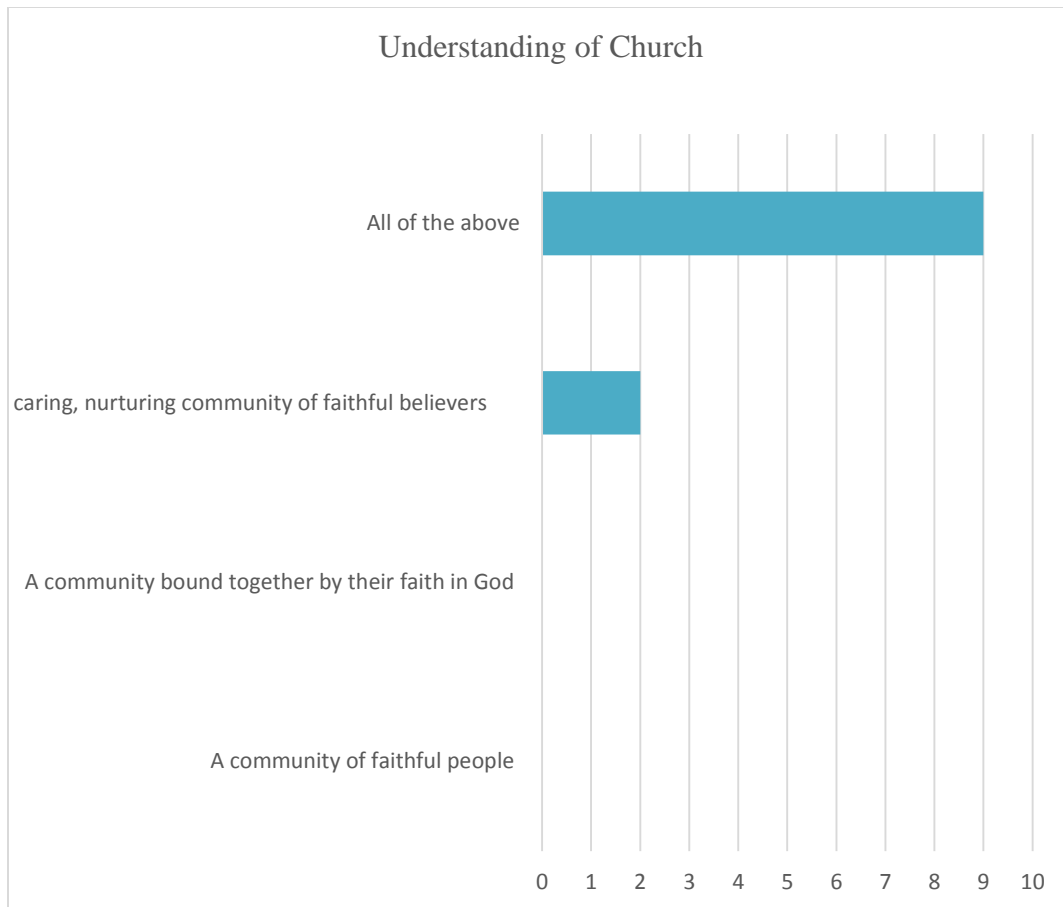
particularly in response to participants' own availability and willingness to pursue further encounters in preparation for a possible vocation to the ministry of leadership within their congregations and the wider Diocese, the fact that in none of these responses was there an outright no, indicates a positive opening with respect to a number of possibilities and will be looked at in further detail in the final chapter.

The Following Charts represent quantitative data in response to the Post-Process Questionnaire



How important is it for persons understand the relationship between *baptism* and participation in the life of the Church?





Consequent upon administration of an End-Process questionnaire, a summary of which responses appear in the preceding tables, the following serves to highlight that which will be further analyzed in the final chapter, with respect to the thesis being advanced; recommendations to be offered to the Diocese also will flow therefrom. Samples of actual responses which reflect qualitative data are located elsewhere, in the Appendices.

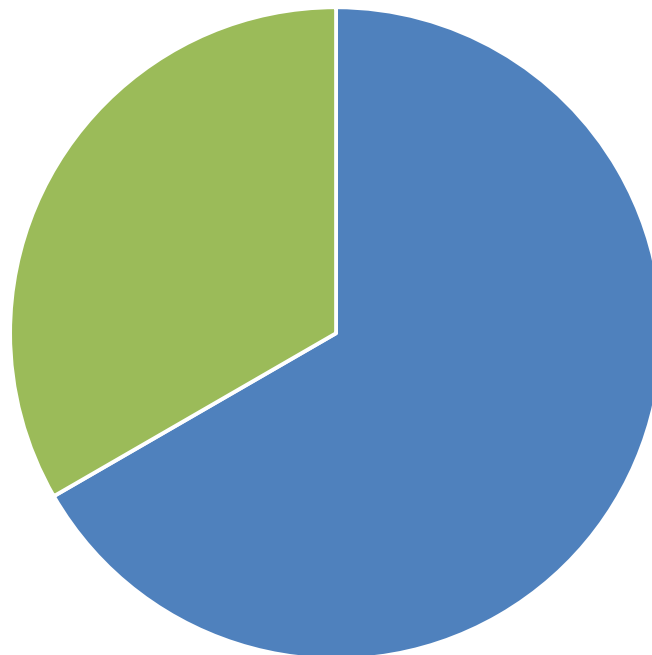
- Participants came to the conclusion that Baptism is foundational to Church life in more than a ritualized way.
- When the significance of the sacrament of Baptism is fully understood and internalized, a natural response to the relationship of *being in Christ* is experienced to the extent that the idea of leadership begins to transcend obligation and/or duty, becoming in essence, an extension and expression of worship.
- To internalize the fundamental role of Baptism as the sacrament that authenticates and reinforces the relationship of *being in Christ* and by extension belonging to the faith Community, also gives shape to the nature of the participation viz. with respect to spiritual gifts and the active pursuit of discernment processes relative to the manner in which gifts are developed and shared.
- To understand the Baptismal vows as inspiring more than a cerebral response; but rather a challenge to a lived reality, can help in the shaping of lifestyle choices with the added dimension of impacting others within and outside the Community.
- Following on the from the above is the issue and challenge of being *intentional* in seeking to discern the type and nature of one's spiritual gift[s] and accepting the challenge of facilitating others along a similar process and path [this is mentoring].

The following charts, therefore, visually demonstrate the impact of the discernment process that was in essence the culminating activity of the intervention project. Questions concerning that process are also included in the Post-Process questionnaire.

Once again, and in like manner to that observed in the Pre-Process questionnaire, the Post-Process questionnaire recorded no negative responses, with respect to the manner in which the discernment process was received by participants in the sample.

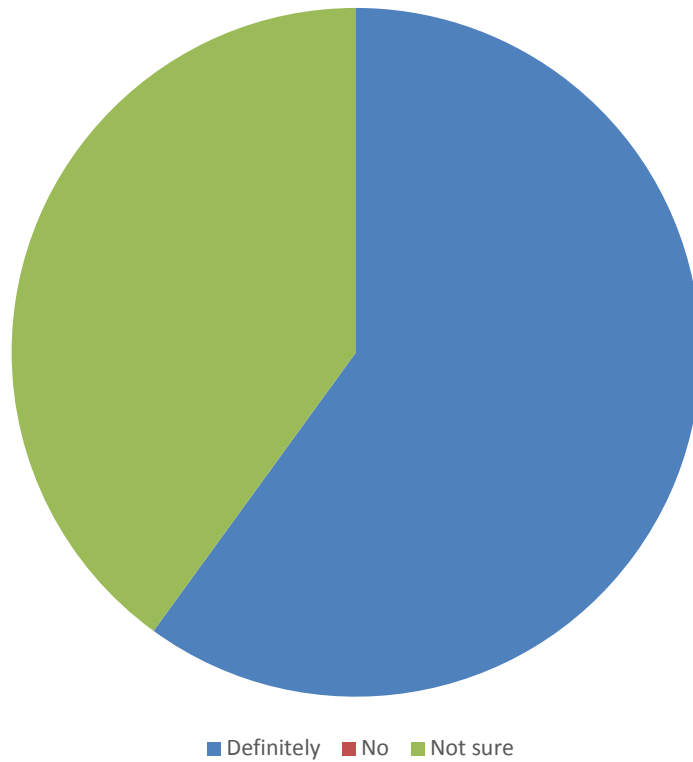
While there remained elements of uncertainty with regard to both the impact of the process and its relationship to the possibility of further training towards the office and ministry of the Congregational Mentor, what seemed clear was that a majority of the participants had made several strides forward in their understanding of vocation, discernment and the combined positive effects of both toward realizing the kind of Church anticipated in the Diocesan Vision, embraced by all the participants.

Has participation in the *group discernment process* positively impacted your awareness of or openness to a particular vocation within the life of the Church?



■ Yes ■ No ■ Sure

Does the Idea of training to become a Congregational Mentor  
appeal to you



It is both enlightening and instructive that both listeners, well known and respected lay leaders from different congregations in the Diocese, were able from that perspective, to offer feedback by way of a response to the process they witnessed and in which they participated, in the following way...

## Listeners' 103 Observations:

1. It was interesting to note that while the majority of participants identified themselves as being active in church, they nevertheless expressed strong dissatisfaction with the state of the church, describing issues relating to the inflexibility in the church structure and the need for a more vibrant and relevant worship and study environment. That brought into question what was meant by “active” involvement as described by them
2. The engagement of all participants in the discussion of the deeper meaning and implication of their baptismal covenant was also noteworthy. It seemed apparent that many (if not all) had not been exposed to discussions of this nature, especially as it related to their involvement in the life of the church and indeed their personal life and witness. The discussions also brought to light the need for clarification on the relationship between baptism and confirmation
3. It seemed to us that participants had never really been engaged by clergy or other lay persons in “unpacking” the promises and covenant made during baptism and based on ensuing discussions it seemed that most of them began the process of reflecting on how a deeper understanding of these issues could/should impact their life within and outside church.
4. The issue of vocation and discernment also seemed to have resonated with the group and from listening to their discussions we believe they began to appreciate more the need to be more reflective and open to direction that comes from not

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<sup>103</sup> Mesdames Beverly Lawrence and Jacqueline Morgan have served as members of Diocesan Council and are lay leaders in the Kingston Parish Church and Stony Hill Cures respectively.

only parents/mentors but also from spending time in prayerfully reading and meditating on scripture individually and in groups.

5. Listening to the discussions over the period, we could see/sense a definite trend towards a more introspective review of their own spiritual life and how they viewed being “active” in church and perhaps also how they “diagnosed” problems in church life. We heard them beginning to wrestle with or think about different ways of engaging each other and the wider church community.
6. The time spent with the group also demonstrated to them in a practical way the underpinnings of church as a caring community; we saw them share more openly as time went on, about some of the struggles/challenges and also successes in their personal life. There was evolving recognition of the group as a safe space where they would be listened to in a non-judgemental way.

Based on their discussions, they were definitely poised and therefore willing to explore further as a group and in their churches, ways in which they could become catalysts, supporting and engaging their peers in discerning vocation and leadership possibilities.



## Findings and Recommendations:

- There remains a large and growing number of [young] people in Jamaica who, while not having an issue with accepting the reality of a supreme and holy Being, are increasingly turned off by the manner in which those who claim, as the [Anglican] Church does, to be the visible evidence and tangible expressions of the loving caring presence of that Being in the world, actually engage that which they profess.
- In the Diocese of Jamaica and Cayman Islands, that which is observed in the wider society is similarly reflected in the disconnectedness in the relationship[s] between older and younger generations.
- One significant factor influencing the disconnect and widening of the [relational] gap between the generations [old and young], remains the Church's inability to *hear* the plea of the latter group for new and renewed ways of being Church – a Faith Community built upon principles of inclusion, care and the nurturing of potentialities, rooted in the theology of Baptism.
- The decision by the Diocesan [Episcopal] leadership to embark on a process of re-visioning, upheld by a Vision Statement that speaks to inspired and inspiring discipleship extending beyond the boundaries of Church buildings to the wider society, provides a golden opportunity for a process aimed at re-connecting with those unique qualities and principles; it offers a challenge to ensure preparation of the membership, in approaching and engaging the task of mission, not from a sense of duty but as a demonstration of its commitment to the further act of ministry and service to God and all peoples made in God's image.

- Grasping the opportunity and all that inheres in it potentially, for actualizing the Vision articulated can begin with recognition of the fact that bringing the younger generations of its members into mainstream leadership will be a step in the right direction. The following recommendations are offered therefore, toward that objective.
1. The Diocesan Synod, through its Boards of Mission and Ministry and Education and Youth and their related departments, particularly that of Leadership Development and Training, commissions a Pilot Project targeting Youth and Young Adults [18 – 35] to be identified, trained and formed for possible leadership and the exercise of a unique ministry within their respective congregations as mentors of their peers.
  2. Using the module designed by Rev Canon Georgia Jervis [with appropriate and recommended modifications], the Project should be conducted for an initial period of six [6] months within one region<sup>104</sup> of the Diocese to be identified by the Departments of Leadership Development and Education and Youth.
  3. Parameters of the project will be decided by both Boards on the advice of personnel from the respective departments and will include compilation of a comprehensive Project report with recommendations for further training if necessary and/or the incremental extension of the Project to other regions of the Diocese. This report should be presented to the Synod of 2020

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<sup>104</sup> The Diocese has three regions; each is supervised in its missionary activity by a regional council and chaired by a Suffragan Bishop.

In light of the preceding, it seems reasonable to assert that [engaging] this Project is in essence catalytic; a small effort with potential for positively impacting a larger outcome viz. *lively, energetic discipleship*.

## PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

“Quo Vadis...”

### *The ‘soul’ impact of the Process*

#### The Influence of Early Years:

Reflecting on the process of engaging this project and the thesis that evolved as a result, a fitting summary of the experience and its impact would be that it has been more than an academic exercise. The journey, as it were, through the several phases involved – outlining and presenting a proposal; selecting and briefing those among and with whom the specially designed teaching module would be tested; collecting and analyzing the data – has been in essence, an experience best described as being akin to *vocational renewal*. There was an almost revelatory character to the entire process, manifested in heightened awareness, of the way [one’s] vocation evolves...apprehending new ways of being, yet holding firmly to and maintaining its original grounding.

The fact is, the vocation to ministry and leadership, being neither generic nor static, speaks to the transcendent yet immanent nature of God, from whose heart, every call is issued with a goal that is as unique as it is dynamic...tailor made it may be argued, for the individual to whom it is being issued. The process of my own vocation to ordained ministry arose out of an acute awareness of the fact that the Church’s leaders were ill-equipped rather than unable, during the period of my adolescence into early adulthood, to help my peers and me, deal with the challenges of making sense of our relationship with God, in light of the ultimate questions for which we were seeking answers. What we craved was the kind of guidance that could positively assist us in our wrestling with the

presumed disconnectedness, of an ecclesial way of being, that was often at variance with the socio-cultural realities that were, even then, shaping the adults we were becoming. It seemed then, that there was no identifiable point at which both extremes i.e. ecclesial and social norms and values, converged. While the cultural mores spoke to the heart of our people's history, and the social moorings within which our burgeoning nation was anchored, that for which we longed...which the Church, through its leaders, was failing to assist us in apprehending, was a way of evaluating our experiences in light of a loving, Christian God, with whom we desired to have relationship.

The negative attitudes of the adult members of the Church, the *sacrament* and visible sign of God's presence in the world, conflicted with what as young people, we were sensing, but for lack of guidance, were not able to clearly articulate. There was something of an unwritten rule, it seemed, that the (Anglican) Church's way of being was to be internalized without reference to any pedagogical method to ensure clarity and facilitate the kind of wholehearted embrace of the faith that is beyond giving mental assent.

Fascination...the Prelude to Vocation:

Although my call to ministry was experienced as a member of the Anglican Church, much of what I was learning about the significance of baptism to leadership within the Church came from sources whose theology and belief systems were fundamentally different. It was my fascination with what I perceived as the deep challenge of *Anglican theology* therefore, that ultimately won the day. My positive response to vocation began a journey that allowed me, upon completion of my theological training, to offer for positions within the diocese, that were youth focused and from which I would have a

larger platform, to champion the cause for greater inclusion of youth and young adults into mainstream congregational life and leadership.

A number of years were spent, therefore, devising and facilitating a variety of youth-oriented programs, whilst agitating for the increased presence of more youth on local and diocesan committees. There was significant improvement with the latter move viz a viz the Church's visible affirmation of its youth membership, at the levels of decision making and policy. There remained however, one seemingly insurmountable challenge - the number of young people in church, even with an increase in youth-friendly programs, was not positively affecting the regular [youth] numbers. In fact, there was a steady decrease in their number, a problem that raised the issue of [youth] attrition and the fact that solutions did not lay simply in the provision of new programs or even increased leadership, but that a more fundamental problem that was not being addressed. It was therefore, during my sojourn at Virginia Theological Seminary, having opportunity to explore issues involved in experiential education, holistic environments of learning, John Westerhoff's thesis within his styles of faith, zooming in on the hiatus between the stages of questioning and owning faith, that the possibility of breakthrough, requiring a process of education and mentoring, rooted in the Church's baptismal theology, began to take shape.

Ever so slowly, it became apparent that the real need in the diocese, from as far back as the period of my own youthful wrestling [and perhaps before], was an intentional program that would unpack and cogently outline the rationale for the Church's inclusion of children and youth among its membership. What also became increasingly clear was that within such a rationale, a way towards educating the youth [and wider Church]

should be outlined. This would then enable the enable them, from a clarified place of understanding, to embrace the authenticity, not only of their membership, but of the integral role that is theirs in facilitating the Church's mission to a wider audience, including their peers. Additionally, the need for focused mentoring as a prelude to discernment was to be introduced and encouraged as being integral to enabling the positive grappling as it were, with the vocation to leadership, within the community of faith.

#### The Project: A Revelatory Experience:

The experience of working with a group of young adults from age cohorts that comprise the majority (60%)<sup>105</sup> of Jamaica's population viz. between 18 – 35 years was in and of itself an eye opener. Getting to know and interact with them brought home with unambiguous clarity, the fact that the diocesan vision of enabling *joyful, energetic discipleship* in impacting the nation[s] it serves, would depend in large part on the involvement of these youngsters and others like them, in more than a superficial way. I found that in as much as I was seeking to engage this group of highly intelligent, articulate young people possessing a deep desire to know and be in relationship with God, I was being inspired, perhaps even pushed towards an evaluation of my own self and the changes that I too was being called upon to embrace.

I found interesting, in a self-educating way, that while I had laid out a clear agenda to guide the process, I was challenged by the participants insistence on dealing with issues affecting their full participation in the life of the Church, whether or not those issues,

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<sup>105</sup> Jamaica National Housing and Population Census

were part of that agenda. I learned rather quickly, that my ministerial function throughout the process was not so much as leader as it was facilitator/enabler. I was being engaged by this wonderful group of young adults, in a way that required a disciplined way of listening that in a real sense, quieted the need in me to talk/tell. I came to appreciate in a more nuanced way, the fact that ability to listen deeply, being germane to the processes of discernment I was seeking to introduce, was one that I too was being called to model in a deliberate way. I found therefore, that somewhere in mid-stream, I was led to change my *modus operandi*, to ensure that issues I wanted to raise...that which I intended to teach and share, were kept in focus, but in a way that recognized, entertained and affirmed the positions, questions, concerns and responses that were pertinent issues for the participants as they learnt to embrace the fact of their 'belonging' to the community of faith.. Recalling the work of Argyris and Schon (1978),<sup>106</sup> regarding Theories in Action and in particular, the significance of a Model II way of being, in enabling the double loop learning that issues in commitment to honest sharing and understanding, I submitted to the change in my own outlook that and practice, as a ministering teacher, that was consistent with the image of *midwife* that was consistent with what I was experiencing and proposing to do with my young colleagues.

The process, therefore, challenged and yet affirmed my ministerial vocation. I became acutely aware, in a renewed way, that engaging persons within the age cohorts mentioned was at heart, about dialogue viz. the ability to exchange thoughts and ideas, to even contend on controversial issues and yet, to mutually perceive in the process, points of congruence that provide a level foundation from which to work...towards solutions. I

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<sup>106</sup> Organizational Learning; a theory of Action Perspective



was able during the course of the various exchanges with participants, to hear with greater clarity and intentionally respond, to the call to re-affirm the blessing and privilege, to diligently and with due care, prepare the soil, plant and water and tend young *shoots* at every stage of their development, rather than obsess about pre-determined results that take no cognizance of the *climatic* conditions that impact growth.

While my dream remains one of ensuring that there are structural changes that will facilitate a diocesan operative mandating the creation of catechetical centers in its three regions; places where every member of the Church but especially the youth, can find a place and space in which, along with properly trained mentors, to discern individually and together, details of God's call to leadership within the body, I have come to the realization also, like the Apostle Paul,<sup>107</sup> that the last word with respect to whatever growth will take place...is God's.

Together with and encouraged by, the participants with whom the project herein described was tested, I am currently engaging a post-project study and reflection process. Guided by David Benner's book The Gift of Knowing Yourself, we have begun an experiment with the Theology Pub concept, as a way to deepen self-understanding and vocational awareness as we learn more about God and each other. The very act of meeting with youngsters who could be my children, to engage theological, vocational and leadership issues in a *third space* pulls me beyond my usual levels of comfort and yet...there is no denying the fact that this is where I need to be, listening with my young friends, to discern God's further call...

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<sup>107</sup> 1 Corinthians 3: 6 - 8

## CONCLUSION “Closing the Gap”

### *Narrowing the Distance: Facilitating Discernment of Vocation among Youth and Young Adults*

The search for a *New Normal* implied in the Vision Statement of the Diocese of Jamaica and Cayman Islands, highlighted and given particular focus in the words: *lively energetic discipleship* that stand not only as the axis upon which the entire vision turns but describes both the journey of and goal towards which it looks, began in earnest at the Diocesan synod in 2012 and gained further momentum when prospects of a five year *re-visioning plan*, that would in essence propel the Church towards a revised praxis with respect to its mission and ministry in a changing social religious and political climate was outlined and presented by the Diocesan Bishop.

A key factor towards achieving the anticipated renewal, as has been highlighted in preceding chapters, was the adoption of a strategic framework that would hopefully propel the Diocese towards a new missionary methodology. This methodology would in essence be a process, the goal of which would be transformation and would, of necessity impact age-old Diocesan structures. The new methodology therefore, was being advocated, not as an end in itself, but rather as a means to the end anticipated in the vision viz.

*“Inspiring and enlisting recruits in active discipleship as members of the body of Christ and new members/stakeholders of a growing and dynamic Diocese.”<sup>108</sup>*

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<sup>108</sup> Quotation from the Diocesan Vision Statement

One rather significant challenge, embedded in the new direction that was being called forth and which served in essence as the hypothesis of the thesis being advanced, is the fact that whilst there was presumed clarity of thought and intention, conveyed in the [words of the] Vision, the method or modus operandi that would drive and facilitate its implementation and ultimate achievement were as yet unclear. Whereas aspects of the vision spoke to a certain being and becoming with respect to the image of the Diocese and its mission, there remained one essential matter, germane to the unfolding image that was not being given serious attention; consequently, the image projected, was not a true representation of the spirit of the Vision.

It was obvious, therefore that a *parsing*<sup>109</sup> of the Vision Statement was in order; not merely to understand its syntactic relevance but to unpack its meaning[s] contextually. This would be done in order to have deeper appreciation for the vision's importance as well as the significance of the journey itself. It was in this regard then that the words *lively* and *energetic* describing the kind and quality discipleship envisioned in the missionary operative, honed in as it were, on a section of the Diocesan membership that was somehow being overlooked and without whose active participation and contribution, any holistic and pervasive realization of the anticipated vision, would become a lesson in futility.

The hypothesis affirmed therefore, lifting up for more detailed scrutiny with regard to the anticipated outcome, the youth and young adult population of the Diocese. Supported by findings from a commissioned research, carried out with specific reference to the Anglican Diocese and underscoring the fact that individuals comprising this particular

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<sup>109</sup> Defined in the Cambridge Dictionary as separating a sentence into grammatical parts

group, were virtually missing from the Church's pews, there was clear evidence that apart from an intentional inclusion of this group in whatever processes would be engaged in executing the mission, the reality of a new normal would neither be understood or experienced.

Additionally, the findings<sup>110</sup> were corroborated and given further credence by data from the national population and housing census (2011). That latter data set them against a socio-religious background and context with which the Church would have to seriously grapple, if it had any hope of attaining its visionary goal. There was in all this the unveiling of a responsibility to facilitate a new movement towards and with youth and young adults that the Church could not afford to abdicate if it were to succeed in its mission to preach the Good News of God's unconditional love to a world, a nation that had in many respects lost and was in the throes of losing its ultimate purpose and sense of being upheld by an omnipotent God.

In light of the foregoing, a number of initiatives with respect to the ultimate unfolding of the thesis were undertaken and these are summarized hereunder.

- Extant documents were produced and examined, their contents verifying hitherto unsubstantiated perceptions of the Diocese being in a state of numerical, spiritual and financial decline.
- There was also evidence that the numerical decline pointed to much more than the number total of the Church's membership and consequently, had to be viewed by means of *progressive/multi-focal* lenses in order to examine in more

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<sup>107</sup> Preliminary Report of the Anglican Church (2012)

minute detail, the potential membership [into which they were as yet unable to tap], from the large and growing number of un-committed persons within the wider Jamaican populace, claiming no religious affiliation.

- Implicit in all this was the clarion call also, for the kind of renewal that considered a change in missionary methodology that would ensure results commensurate with the mission goal [s]. In other words and here, application of a rather pertinent Jamaican proverb says it all... *You can't plant peas if you want to reap corn!*
- The next phase of the journey entailed looking at the achievement potential of the vision via the lens of youth and young adult development [with specific reference to those within the 18 – 35 age cohorts] and therewith the kind of ministry that would appeal to and engage their interest and assistance. The issue of the means of by which membership in the faith community was highlighted and with it, the rationale for the existence of the community per se. This also brought into focus the fact that in practice that which was enshrined in its theology with respect to Baptism and which raised the issue of whether all baptized persons were accorded the rights and privileges of that status, relative to systems of operation within the Diocese, was being adhered to.
- The issue of leadership was seen, therefore, as one posing a perennial challenge and accompanying it was the missing element of the perspectives and participation of young and emerging generations in Diocesan missionary endeavors.

- Arising from explorations into the issue of leadership was the more focused matter of vocations which sought to ground leadership within a context that moved it beyond mere abilities to focus on its more holistic dimensions and hence the fact that true leadership is in response to a divine call, exercised and nurtured in relationship with the Eternal One who both issues and provides the wherewithal to sustain it.
- The Church's role in creating space, first of all for [being partners in] discerning that call came in for serious questioning. The conclusion based on evidence, was that the space provided, being heavily skewed toward the more chronologically mature, did not always allow for the nurture and development of persons within a certain age range and by that same token, sent a [covert] message that their gifts and talents – their contribution[s] to the viability to the body, were tangential.
- The work of John Westerhoff among others was closely examined, in an attempt to look critically at issues of faith development relative to the gap created by the absence of younger generations from traditional Churches. The examination provided much needed leadership by offering suggestions albeit contextually with regard to the various ways in which this gap could be narrowed and the goals anticipated in the Diocesan vision achieved.

The intervention process [Project] that enlisted the help of a sample of [18 – 35 year old] youth and young adults proved to be invaluable in providing background information for the thesis being advanced. Not only did project participants [including those tasked with the role of *listening*] engage the process with an incredible sense of honesty and

commitment, their individual and collective responses gave credence to the hypothesis that without the full participation of youth and young adults in the exercise of mission and ministry by the Diocese, achievement of its visionary objectives would be highly improbable. Furthermore, the positive movement observed, with reference to participants' increased knowledge and openness to the challenge of leadership within the Diocese, underscored the main thrust of the thesis viz. within the larger scheme of the Diocesan visionary reality of *lively energetic discipleship* resides in the need for focused and sustained application of teaching/learning initiatives. Such innovations will serve the dual purpose of strengthening the knowledge base of those being targeted even as they enable and facilitate their continued openness to the further call to service and leadership within the Diocese.

This entire process has without doubt, demonstrated that wherever there are problems, possibilities also abound. Challenges remain the *flip side* of opportunities, waiting to be discovered so that where the former is purposefully and intentionally engaged, steady emergence of the latter, even in places where they are least expected, is a definite possibility.

One of the key gleanings from this entire process, therefore, has been the capacity within [young] Jamaicans, once stimulated, to eke out of seemingly hopeless situations, possibilities that demonstrate their innate resilience. It is anticipated therefore, that the same resilience will be demonstrated by the [current] Diocesan leadership in taking a leap of faith and engaging the recommendations herein offered.

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APPENDIX A

Pre-Process Questionnaire

Male [ ] Female [ ]  
Age.....

Active in Church [ ] Not Active [ ] Nominal [ ]

The questions below are in an effort to ascertain your understanding of **Baptism**, its relationship to **Ecclesiology** [the structure of the Church] and the process towards **Discernment of Vocation**.

Kindly answer all questions as best and honestly as you can.

1. At what stage were you baptized? Infancy [ ] Adolescence [ ] Adulthood [ ]

2. Were you helped by your Church/parents/godparents to understand the meaning and implications of your **Baptism**? Yes [ ] No [ ] Not Really [ ]

3. Do you believe enough is being done by the Anglican Church to help people generally and youth and young adults (18 – 35) in particular, to understand the relationship between *baptism* and the life of faith? Yes [ ] No [ ] Not Sure [ ]

4. In no more than three sentences, explain your understanding of the Church as **Community** *of* **faith**

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.....  
.....

5. Do you believe that as a *Community of Faith*, the Church has a responsibility to ensure that the baptized are nurtured in a way that leads to spiritual maturity? Yes

[ ] No [ ] Not Sure [ ]

6. Are you aware that many people within the age groups 18 – 35 years are *missing* from Anglican congregations? Yes [ ] No [ ] Haven't Noticed [ ]

7. What in your estimation are some of the reasons why people in these age categories are not attending or participating in Anglican churches? They do not

believe in God [ ] services are boring [ ] the church "culture" is too inflexible [ ] Other [ ] [briefly

specify].....  
.....  
.....  
.....

8. As you have heard it used in Church, the term *Vocation* refers to Ordained Service [ ] Any work to which one feels a divine call [ ] I am not sure [ ]

9. Do you think persons in the 18 – 35 age cohorts would more readily participate in Church if specific/intentional efforts were made to mentor and motivate them? Yes [ ] No [ ] Not Sure [ ]

10. In three sentences, explain your understanding of the term *Congregational Mentor*?.....

.....

.....  
.....

11. Can Congregational *Mentors* facilitate the spiritual growth and development of people in the age cohorts mentioned earlier? Yes [ ] No [ ] Not Sure [ ]

12. Briefly explain your response to question 11 above

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

13. Have you ever heard of a *discernment process*? Yes [ ] No [ ] I can't Recall [ ]

14. Would you give consideration to being taken through a discernment process? Yes [ ] No [ ] Not Sure [ ]

15. Does the idea of being trained as a *Congregational Mentor* appeal to you Yes [ ] No [ ] Not Sure [ ]

## APPENDIX B

### Outline of the Discernment Process Engaged

Step I (30 minutes): Participants will be introduced to the theme *cruce, libro et atro* (translate this: cross, book and plow). This will be done via introduction to St Benedict, his journey and the rule he created to help his monks and ordinary Christians, live the Gospel with humility and in a balanced way. An imperative of this step is looking at the priority of prayer, not as an added extra, but inextricably linked to life itself. Examples will be drawn from Benedict whose rule, summarized by three interlinked vows viz. *listening, openness to God and obedience*, advocated a world view in which prayer becomes the axis on which the believer's life turns.

Step II (30 minutes): Participants will be introduced to the art of *listening* as a key component of prayer and hence discernment. The Benedictine way of listening with the heart<sup>4</sup> will be explored as participants are encouraged to go off (5 minutes) in pairs to speak with and listen to each other. They will then be invited to share, first with each other and then with the group that which they heard from words spoken, body movements or silences, that conveyed supporting or conflicting messages. Another exercise in listening will be introduced in which participants will be encouraged to sit still for 3 minutes and, allowing their bodies to relax, listen to their breathing and in that process, empty themselves of anything that would conflict with the ability to truly hear. At the end of the 3 minutes, participants will be encouraged to share how they felt and what they experienced within the silence.

Step III (30 minutes): Using the Benedictine vow of *conversatio morum* Participants will be led to explore connections between stillness (external and internal) and being open to

God. They will be asked to revisit the exercise done earlier, in which having entered that quiet space, they were able to discern and embrace a moment where God alone was allowed to speak. A bidding prayer (author unknown) will then be introduced for participants' contemplation at this point, with the sole instruction that they allow its words and the images evoked, to challenge them. Responses/reactions will be taken at the end of the session.

Step IV (40 minutes): In this penultimate step of engaging Benedict's vows as a way to the discipline of discernment, participants will be encouraged to look at what is meant by and required in *obedience*. Esther de Waal's explanation of the word's Latin root and that which it conveys will be used as a springboard for further discussion.

Step V (1 hour): Participants will be divided into three groups of four (4). Each group will be asked to discuss/contemplate issues related to a scenario that will be given them with specific questions for each group. Groups will then be invited to share their responses in a plenary.

Scenario: A significant number of young adults [between 25 and 35 years] in your congregation have expressed deep concern regarding the *monotony* of Sunday worship; their increasing disconnect with *congregational life* has resulted from the belief that their needs and concerns do not seem to be a priority, compared to other congregational matters. How would you advise these young adults with respect to the specifics stated below?

Question for Group I: Identify the main problem[s] and what you believe to be the root cause[s]

Question for Group II: Describe the difference in the response of your head and your heart to the situation. How would you set about bringing balance?

Question for Group III: Briefly outline the steps you would you take to resolve the impasse?

Question for Group IV: List four questions you would pose to the rector and the same number to the curate that would facilitate clarity without apportioning blame?

Break (15 minutes)

Plenary (1 hour): Each group will be given 20 minutes to share the response to their question and, combining significant elements of each response, prepare a composite response to the scenario that demonstrates understanding of that involved in listening, discerning and counseling: characteristics germane to the ministry and role of Congregational Mentor.

Final Comments:

Richard Foster speaks to the fact that the desire to hear the voice of God is a gift of grace and begins from a place of prayer. Jesus taught his disciples what is known in the Christian world as the Lord's Prayer (see Matthew 6; 9 – 13) which may also be interpreted as a way of relating to God in order to discern and do God's will. The way of discernment is not one that leads only to individual enlightenment it moves the discerning believer to see and relate to individuals and systems around, based upon that discerned. In other words, the discerning Christian with a desire to live the Gospel message with humility and balance is able to dream with God. This means very simply, having a sense



of (discerning) what God is doing in the world and the humility to offer one-self to be used as a channel of that transformation. Brian McLaren puts it rather succinctly, "...to dream our little dreams within God's big dream." In the final analysis then, this means being prepared to fully embrace disciplines of silence, openness to God and obedience as the means by which we are enabled to relate to the wider community, demonstrating the loving kindness, justice and compassion of God.

APPENDIX C

**End of Process Questionnaire**

Male [ ]      Female [ ]  
Age.....

The questions below are in an effort to ascertain whether the intervention process in which you were a participant served to clarify/deepen your understanding of **baptism**, its relationship to **ecclesiology** [the structure of the Church] and **your ability to discern a particular vocation within the Church**.

Kindly answer **all** questions as best and honestly as you can.

1. Has your understanding of the meaning and significance of your *Baptism* and its relationship to your membership in the Church, been clarified, as a result of the process in which you participated? [ ] I have gained deeper understanding and clarity [ ] I have experienced a level of clarity but am still uncertain about some issues [ ] I am no clearer now than I was prior to the process
2. How important is it for persons in your age group (18 – 35) to understand the relationship between *baptism* and participation in the life of the Church?  
Extremely important [ ] Fairly important [ ] Not really important [ ]
3. In no more than three sentences, explain your response.....  
.....  
.....
4. Which of the following statements best describes your understanding of the Church as *Community of faith*? [ ] A community of faithful people [ ] A

community bound together by their faith in God [ ] A caring, nurturing community of faithful believers [ ] All of the fore-going

5. Do you believe there is a role for lay persons, mentoring others within the *Community of Faith*? Yes [ ] No [ ] Not Sure [ ]

6. Based on your participation in the now concluded process, do you believe persons in the 18 – 35 age groups would become more involved in the life of the Church if intentional efforts were made to mentor and nurture them spiritually? Yes [ ] No [ ] Not Sure [ ]

7. Briefly explain your understanding of what the ministry of mentorship would involve

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

8. Would you become a mentor to persons in your congregation[s] who fall within the specified age groups? [ ] Definitely [ ] I would consider it [ ] Not sure [ ] No

9. Has participation in the **group discernment process** positively impacted your awareness of or openness to a particular vocation within the life of the Church? Yes [ ] No [ ] Not Sure [ ]

Explain.....

.....

.....

10. Does the idea of further training as a *Congregational Mentor* appeal to you?

Definitely  No  Not Sure  Explain

why.....

.....

.....

.....

Are there any other comments you would like to make regarding the (discernment) process in which you participated?.....

.....

.....

.....

APPENDIX D

SAMPLE COMMENTS IN RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS 4 – 7 – 10 – 11/12

*Community of faith*  
The Church as a Community of faith should provide a source of fellowship and support for those who are committed to the Church.

4. In no more than three sentences, explain your understanding of the Church as a Community of Faith.

*Community of faith*

A community of faith is a group of persons who share a belief of hope and anticipate a future based on that belief. The members of the group offer support and encouragement to each other as they face the challenges that may go against their belief or may try to influence them to change their beliefs.

4. In no more than three sentences, explain your understanding of the Church as a Community of Faith.

*Community of faith*  
My understanding of the Church as a community of faith is that it is a gathering of people that provide support system. A place where people freely express their testimonies to encourage each other also a gathering of people who share the good news of God.

5. Do you believe that as a Community of Faith, the Church has a responsibility to ensure

4. In no more than three sentences, explain your understanding of the Church as

*Community* of *faith*

A group of people that share similar beliefs

4. In no more than three sentences, explain your understanding of the Church as

*Community* of *faith*

....Community of faith is where persons come together and share the same beliefs and

faith

4. In no more than three sentences, explain your understanding of the Church as *Community of faith*.

The church as a community of faith in my understanding is a group of people brought together by the same belief. A belief that if we live in love and follow Christ we will be rewarded in the judgement accordingly. To enter this community one must renounce evil and be baptized in name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

4. In no more than three sentences, explain your understanding of the Church as

*Community of faith*... A community of faith is a group of people who share a particular

set of beliefs. In the case of the church, it is a group of people sharing a particular set of

beliefs in the Judeo-Christian worldview, adhering to a particular tradition stemming

from this view, sharing a common understanding and purpose.

4. In no more than three sentences, explain your understanding of the Church as

*Community of faith.*

- The church is the body of Christ.
- Each member plays their part in carrying out the great commission and reflecting the light of Christ in this dark world.
- As part of the church community it is also members' responsibility to support each other through the challenges that all Christians face.

4. In no more than three sentences, explain your understanding of the Church as

**Community of faith**

I believe that the Church as the body of Christ, is a means by which persons who have received and wish to receive salvation may interact with one another and learn to walk in faith from one another, it also a means by which God uses people and their talents to bring others who may not believe or are lukewarm on their belief to come into the fold.

4. In no more than three sentences, explain your understanding of the Church as

**Community of faith**

A community of faith is a body of people in Christ, different parts each serving different purposes, building each other up in faith, holding each other accountable and reaching out together as a community to other communities and individuals in love and service.

4. In no more than three sentences, explain your understanding of the Church as

**Community of faith**

A community of faith of which the church is apart is a group of people sharing a particular sets of beliefs (religious).



SAMPLE COMMENTS IN RESPONSE TO QUESTION 7 "OTHER"

services are boring [  ] the church "culture" is too inflexible [  ] Other [briefly

specify] People are looking for applicability

of the ~~world~~ word of God to their lives;

sermons are often too high/lofty which goes over the heads of many. They see little application to

As you have heard it used in Church, the term *Vocation* refers to Ordained Service [  ]

our lives and context.

Any work to which one feels a divine call [  ] I am not sure [  ]

i. Do you believe that as a community

that the baptized are nurtured in a way that leads to spiritual maturity? Yes [  ] No

[  ] Not Sure [  ]

7. What in your estimation are some of the reasons why people in these age categories are not attending or participating in Anglican churches? They do not believe in God [  ]

services are boring [  ] the church "culture" is too inflexible [  ] Other [briefly

specify] They probably believe that the church

being a community of faith is not so important to them

and they are not important to the church.

7. What in your estimation are some of the reasons why people in these age categories are not attending or participating in Anglican churches? They do not believe in God [ ] services are boring [  ] the church "culture" is too inflexible [  ] Other [briefly specify].....There are not enough other persons of that..... age group for them to interact with.....

7. What in your estimation are some of the reasons why people in these age categories are not attending or participating in Anglican churches? They do not believe in God [ ] services are boring [ ] the church "culture" is too inflexible [ ]

Both of the last two answers offered are reasons, but also is the fact that they are not reached out to in actively seeking to tap into their strengths to contribute to the church.

Community is boosted when the participants are active.

7. What in your estimation are some of the reasons why people in these age categories are not attending or participating in Anglican churches? They do not believe in God [ ] services are boring [ ] the church "culture" is too inflexible [ ✓ ] Other [briefly specify] a flaw in the system (church culture) that doesn't facilitate a form of discipleship that is intimate, accountable, livable, authentic and grace and truth centered. Where the transformative power of the gospel is evident in the lives of the disciples. Our system is perfectly designed to give us the results we are currently getting.

7. What in your estimation are some of the reasons why people in these age categories are not attending or participating in Anglican churches? They do not believe in God [X] services are boring [X] the church "culture" is too inflexible [X] Other [briefly specify] From personal experience I have encountered persons around my age who do believe in God, however they do not like the idea of organized religion, many feel as if the Church is a place of judgement that tries to dictate how exactly each person should live their life. I have also spoken with those that feel as if they are not being spiritually nourished from the services that the Anglican Church provides, because it is teaching, engaging and is restricted by traditions of the past.

7. What in your estimation are some of the reasons why people in these age categories are not attending or participating in Anglican churches? They do not believe in God [ ] services are boring [ ✓ ] the church "culture" is too inflexible [ ] Other [briefly specify] **Some persons believe our order of service is boring. The songs are not very contemporary. There is also a misconception of the type of persons who attend Anglican churches.**

SAMPLE COMMENTS IN RESPONSE TO QUESTION 10 EXPLAINING PARTICIPANTS UNDERSTANDING OF THE TERM AND ROLE OF A CONGREGATIONAL MENTOR

10. In three sentences, explain your understanding of the term *Congregational*

*Mentor?* A congregational mentor is one who would guide, teach, support and study the Bible with their mentee. He/she would be a confidante and accountability partner.

10. In three sentences, explain your understanding of the term *Congregational*

*Mentor?* I would suspect it's a person who nurtures, guide support new and existing believers and they deepens their faith and discern God's will for them.

10. In three sentences, explain your understanding of the term *Congregational*

*Mentor?*...Where the delegated/assigned person would come together and mentor persons in the direction of our lord and savior Jesus Christ.....

10. In three sentences, explain your understanding of the term *Congregational Mentor*?

A congregational mentor is someone who is assigned to a newly baptized or confirmed member of the church. This person is expected to guide the newly baptized / confirmed member on the practices of the church and the various organizations in the church. The congregational mentor is expected to help the newly baptized/ confirmed make identify ways that they can participate and contribute to the life of the church.

10. In three sentences, explain your understanding of the term *Congregational*

*Mentor? A Congregational mentor would be someone who would give good guidance to those he/she would be in the care of.*

10. In three sentences, explain your understanding of the term *Congregational Mentor*? A congregational mentor would be a mature disciple of Jesus, who walks alongside a less mature disciple of Jesus showing them how to live as Jesus did. They would be present in the everyday lives of their mentee providing wise and godly counsel, teaching them how to both be and make disciples.

In three sentences, explain your understanding of the term *Congregational Mentor*:

A congregational mentor is one who commands a certain amount of knowledge and understanding about the church, its beliefs and people in general who then uses that to be a point of reference on certain matters. The congregational mentor is responding to call upon his life to carry forward the work of Christ to others. It is expected that the work of the mentor will help to sustain and support the wholesome ministry of the church in his or her particular locale.

10. In three sentences, explain your understanding of the term *Congregational Mentor*?

This may be a person who encourages persons within the Church on their walk with Christ, and provides means of growth and development on this walk.

10. In three sentences, explain your understanding of the term *Congregational*

Mentor? A Congregational mentor would be someone who would give sound guidance to those he/she would be in the care of.

10. In three sentences, explain your understanding of the term *Congregational Mentor*?

This would be a person designated from the congregation to to mentor other persons in the congregation. This could be done through one on one discipleship, group bible study, recruiting these persons to plug them into places where they could be useful to the church community.

10. In three sentences, explain your understanding of the term *Congregational Mentor*.

- A person who builds a relationship with another member of the congregation in order to influence their spiritual growth.
- A mature Christian who helps a new believer to understand the faith.
- A teacher and accountability partner.

SAMPLE COMMENTS IN RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS 11/12

12. Briefly explain your response to question 11 above

By sharing their own experiences of life in the church, special services and activities and how different practices have impacted their own development as Christians, congregational mentors can encourage the spiritual development of new members.

11. Can Congregational *Mentors* facilitate the spiritual growth and development of people in the age cohorts mentioned earlier? Yes  No  Not Sure

12. Briefly explain your response to question 11 above

I think we often feel that once an adult, it is okay for us to "let go" or we do not feel like mentorship is needed anymore but from experience, I would say it is needed more than ever.

13. Have you ever heard of a *discernment process*? Yes  No  I can't Recall

12. Briefly explain your response to question 11 above

By sharing their own experiences of life in the church, special services and activities and how different practices have impacted their own development as Christians, congregational mentors can encourage the spiritual development of new members.

11. Can Congregational *Mentors* facilitate the spiritual growth and development of people in the age cohorts mentioned earlier? Yes  No  Not Sure

12. Briefly explain your response to question 11 above

If such person is adequately trained I believe that such person would be a great asset to the Church and the young can have a much stronger connection.



Answer yes

11. Briefly explain your response to question 10 above.

Congregational mentors can facilitate the spiritual growth and development of young people between 18-35 by being a guide to them and actively engaging them on their faith.

The mentor is always thinking about new ways to excite this particular group in a bid to keep them in the church.

1. Can Congregational *Mentors* facilitate the spiritual growth and development of people in the age cohorts mentioned earlier? Yes [  ] No [  ] Not Sure [  ]

2. Briefly explain your response to question 11 above. A congregational mentor can facilitate spiritual growth. This would look somewhat similar to Jesus' example of being with his apostles in his 3 year ministry. Facilitates describes the process perfectly in that it would really be the Holy Spirit working through the mentor to impact the mentee. The

mentor will need to demonstrate total dependence on the Holy Spirit to his/her mentee as opposed to a self focused effort to bring about behavioural change. To paraphrase the Apostle Paul, God brings the increase we are only planters and waterers on His farm.

Answer not sure

I believe that spiritual growth is something that one has to want personally and if someone is seeking a means which to experience such growth then a congregational mentor may be helpful.

Answer not sure

Congregational mentors can hold their mentees accountable. I think of the concept of relational evangelism. By developing a relationship with their mentees, they can minister in the faith to them, and set out goals for spiritual development, exploring ways to achieve that personally with God as well as in community with the wider church.

11. Can Congregational *Mentors* facilitate the spiritual growth and development of people in the age cohorts mentioned earlier? Yes  No  Not Sure

12. Briefly explain your response to question 11 above  
*Congregational Mentors can facilitate the spiritual growth and development of Delhi people by creating an environment of learning, discernment and guidance.*

11. Can Congregational *Mentors* facilitate the spiritual growth and development of people in the age cohorts mentioned earlier? Yes  No  Not Sure

12. Briefly explain your response to question 11 above Every one receives information differently and has a different encounter to things such as spiritual beings therefore in my opinion we only can guide/or lead a person to the right thing and comfort and be a mentor if they have any doubt we would be there to take the path with

11. Can Congregational *Mentors* facilitate the spiritual growth and development of people in the age cohorts mentioned earlier? Yes  No  Not Sure

Mentorship is the model given to us by Jesus. He mentored the disciples before leaving them to make disciples of others. We should follow his effective example.



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