

The Anglican Diocese of Kootenay
Co-creating a world where all experience and share the transforming power of God's love
Provisional Values, Vision, and Mission

Background

One of the core recommendations of “A Path Forward,” the Structures Working Group’s December 1, 2022 report to Diocesan Council, was the need:

to develop a provisional vision and mission that will shepherd the work of the Diocese for the next two years, grounding it in a guiding theological framework that allows members and leaders of the Diocesan community to hold and honour the realities of both death and life amongst us.

This core task was recommended as a way of creating a cohesive, coherent, and communicable sense of direction for the diocese in this time. This vision flows from recommendations in “A Path Forward.”

While “A Path Forward” identified that the current structures of the diocese no longer adequately serve the mission of the church, to remain focused on these things is to have what Walter Brueggemann calls a *pathetic imagination*.¹ Such a way of seeing the world “is incapable of hosting an alternative world and remains quite satisfied to have its sphere of possibility circumscribed to the small world in front of us.” While we are not looking for a growth-at-all-costs scheme, we ought to be very concerned if the work of the church as a diocesan community of communities is limited solely to managing decline. If God loves the world through acts of Creation and Flourishing, Jubilee and Liberation, Sabbath and Shalom, we ought to be concerned if all we can imagine is death without Resurrection. To see only death is a betrayal of the present reality and promised future of God’s faithful action and agency in the world.

In contrast to the *pathetic imagination*, Brueggemann rearticulates the function and purpose of *prophetic imagination*, which he first wrote about in 1978. In the same article cited above, Brueggemann writes:

“Prophetic imagination can see that present social reality is a construction; it can for that reason be deconstructed and reconstructed differently. That is why, against the intransigent chaplains of the status quo, prophetic imagination always asserts that “the days are coming” when an alternative world will emerge among us...For some that work of deconstruction and reconstruction is emancipatory. For many others that work must be resisted.”

¹ Brueggemann, Walter. The Pathetic Imagination. Church Anew Blog.
https://churchanew.org/brueggemann/pathetic-imagination?utm_source=convertkit&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Pathetic%20Imagination%20%5BChurch%20Anew%20Weekly%5D%20-%2010147766&fbclid=IwAR2I5HKi7btPnUYI_T0OKsyBJMoXqR6ZU3K8oYFn24hjox6u8xBRsN7ogHA. Accessed March 13, 2023.

This is the situation in which we find ourselves, and the work before us. For some in our diocese, the work of refocusing and reconstituting diocesan structures to support our participation in God's mission will come at a cost. It will be resisted by some, and may include times of grief. For others, this work will be freeing, offering new life and new possibilities. As we (re)turn our attention to God and God's activity in the world, our diocesan community of communities has the opportunity to vulnerably open ourselves to imaginatively and joyfully participate in God's unfolding mission in the world.

Fidelity to God in this time and place remains paramount, even (perhaps especially!) if the world in which we seek to remain faithful continues to change. All of which brings us to the work before us: to unite the diocesan community in a common set of values, vision, and mission that will help us to focus our faithful participation in God's mission at this time in diocesan life.

Observations

The Diocese of Kootenay does not currently operate with a cohesive, coherent, or communicable values, vision, and mission.

While the Vision & Mission page on the diocesan website attempts to sketch the contours of this vision and mission, it lacks focus.² Such a lack of focus inevitably leads to a great variability in understanding of who we are, what we do, and why we do it in the first place. The clearest statement of what the diocese *is* reads as follows:

As an organization we seek to build the capacity of our congregations to serve their communities. That means that we offer staff and administrative support and guidance while keeping our administrative costs low so that financial and human resources can be directed to service. In fact, without adjusting for inflation, our diocesan operating budget has not increased since 1988. In real dollars we are offering the same services for less money.

In some ways this is a helpful statement about how the diocesan organization seeks to operate. And yet, it doesn't provide a visionary (let alone prophetic!) statement about who God is inviting us to be as a people for this time and place. Below the surface, in what is found on the website (i.e. how we talk about ourselves in public), in the Archbishop's remarks about the Diocese (through charges to Synod, sermons, and other communications), and in the actions and words of the many communities that comprise the diocesan community of communities, there does appear to be a confluence of values undergirding our participation in God's mission and ministry in the world. The goal of this exercise with BARs and eventually with Diocesan Council and Diocesan Synod is to unite ourselves around a set of statements and directions that will help govern our work together in the coming years. These, in

² <https://www.kootenayanglican.ca/pages/vision-mission>

turn, will need to be fleshed out further through the development of an operational plan that includes the replacement or reconfiguration of organizational structures to support the mission.

Prayer for Renewal

*O God who knows the needs of the Church in every place:
by the light of your Holy Spirit, guide us
as we seek to respond faithfully to you in this time.*

*May we open our hands to the future you call us to;
May we open our hearts to those you are calling us to serve;
May we open our minds to new insight and new knowledge;
May we open our doors to go out towards those you would have us meet.*

*Lead us into your future together;
help us to build trust and resilience in our common life;
help us to anticipate and celebrate new possibilities.*

*We pray these things in the name of Jesus,
the one who invites us into the newness of life.*

Defining Values, Vision, and Mission

Before we delve into draft formulations for the Diocese of Kootenay, it may be helpful to delineate the distinction between *Values*, *Vision*, and *Mission* in the following way:

Values are core, guiding principles. They are the heart of what the Anglican Diocese of Kootenay is all about. They are general, essential, and pervasive: everything we do should flow from, and be able to be linked to one or more of them.

Vision is about where our values inspire us to go and who our values inspire us to be. It is aspirational in a way that includes both “things we’re going to do” (i.e. forward-looking), as well as “things we do now, and we want to make sure we continue doing in the future.”

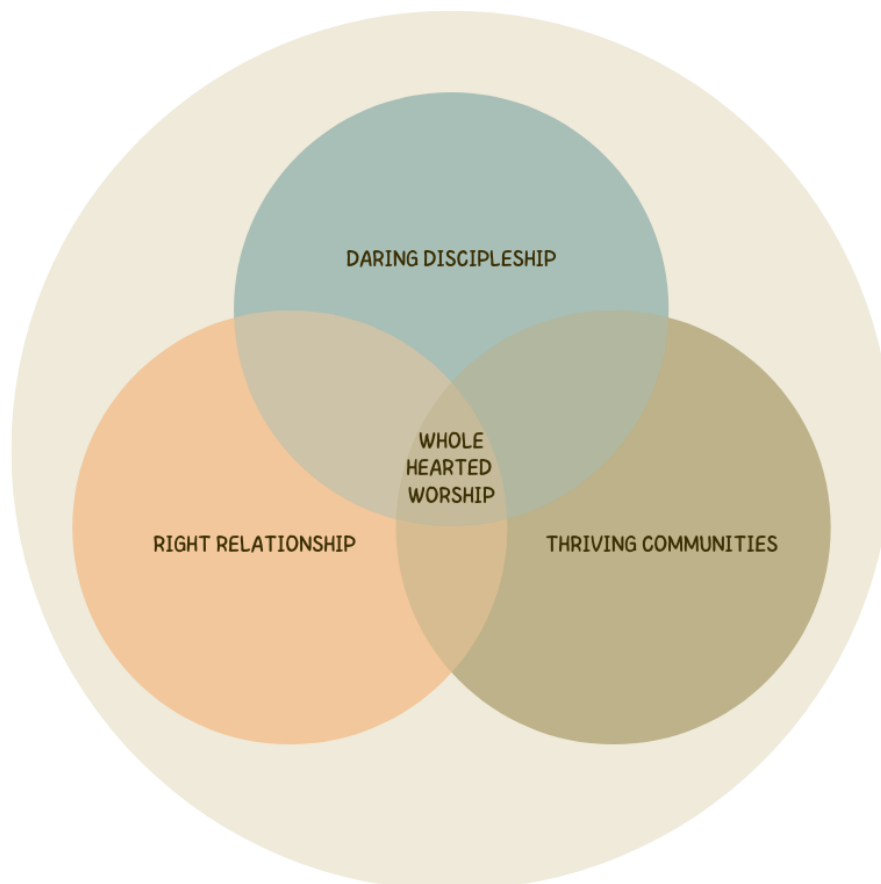
Mission is about how we achieve that vision. Mission encompasses the things we do (the actions we take, what we speak about, and what we embody) that are consistent with and inspired by our values, in pursuit of the vision

Diocese of Kootenay's Values, Vision, and Mission

Values

In some ways, the Diocese's current tagline "Living Faith, Proclaiming Christ, Growing Churches, Empowering Mission" encapsulates the diocese's legacy values statement. Each of these statements on their own could operate as a value out of which a vision might be set. That said, it is unclear how or if these statements have been used to inform a vision, mission, or subsequent operational plan.

What follows is a proposed rewrite of the Diocese's Values that takes hints from current formulations, while framing them in a way that seeks to support all members of the diocesan community of communities in the work that is before us.



Wholehearted Worship in the Anglican Tradition

Core to our work as a diocese is whole-hearted participation in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. This is where it all starts and ends. Indeed, everything else flows from the Eucharistic posture and practice of worshiping God with heart, soul, mind, and strength in self-giving *kenotic* love. This is as much about how we live as what we profess to believe. That is to say, our whole-hearted worship is a way of life not confined to Sunday services or intellectual propositions, but an embodied response to God's grace and mercy. The use of the word "tradition" indicates continuity with what has led to this moment, even as we seek to step boldly into God's unfolding future.

Daring Discipleship

How we live our lives bears witness to the God we serve. Together, as the body of Christ, we are called out of safety and comfort to a daring discipleship that is rooted in a deep sense of connection to the triune God. Our discipleship is an ongoing conversion of individual, congregational, and diocesan life. It celebrates God's presence in the here and now, prioritizes deep listening to God, and seeks to respond to invitations to turn towards Christ and neighbour in faith-filled love.³ Our discipleship is daring when as individuals, congregations, and as a diocesan community of communities, we respond to God's call even when this beckons us out of individual comfort into courageous risk for the sake of the gospel. Discipleship is personal (but not private) and communal, impacting many areas of our diocesan life, including the stewardship of assets, congregations, finances, land, leadership, relationships, staff, partnerships, and public witness (amongst other things). This discipleship is expressed in the embrace and practice of our baptismal ministry as we respond, with God's help, to the changing needs of the world. Such discipleship includes taking a back seat in arenas where we have wrongly dominated. It also requires that we discern places where we must "lead from the front," when others refuse to speak up or act in solidarity with members of God's beloved Creation that society and the church have wrongly neglected, pushed to the margins, or harmed. This may look like taking a stand on issues of injustice, confronting and repenting of our own shortcomings, and seeking with all boldness to embody a way of life that serves God and Creation. Ultimately, such discipleship is about living into our role as image bearers who seek human flourishing and the common good in all aspects of our individual and common life.

³ This is fundamentally a Benedictine formulation that might more traditionally be articulated as an interplay amongst stability, obedience, and conversion of life.

Right Relationship

Throughout the scriptural witness, God's people are repeatedly called back to right relationship amongst God, self, neighbour, and creation. When any one element of this relationship is out of balance, the other elements suffer as well. This value is about seeking the healing of conflicts within individuals, between individuals, amongst congregations, within the diocese, and on a larger scale, with the lands and waterways on which we depend for life. This has implications for peacebuilding, creation care, and the preservation and use of land to ensure a habitable world for future generations. In a more focused way, this value ought to guide all members of the diocesan community of communities into seeking Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation with Indigenous people and nations. At a community and institutional level, this must become a relational and operational priority. When it comes to issues of intersectional justice, this value undergirds the need (rooted in God's vision of shalom) to enact structural changes that reduce and eliminate the ways in which we marginalise and harm particular individuals and groups (both within and beyond the Diocese), and the earth.

Thriving Communities

Thriving Christian communities are the heartbeat of a healthy diocese. When we think about this value from the perspective of our shared diocesan ministry, we include the health and vitality of congregations and ministries (of any size) seeking to embody their baptismal covenant and the diocesan values and vision in the local context. Whether a new witnessing community or a community that has been serving and bearing witness to Christ in its place for many years, cultivating each community's health, sustenance, and witness is of concern for our diocesan community of communities. Individual witnessing communities measure their health based on congregational vitality, financial health, leader health, relational health, the spiritual health of all disciples in the congregation, as well as the health and vitality of their surrounding community.⁴ As a community of communities served by a central diocesan office, the Diocese of Kootenay measures its collective vitality based on the health of all its constituent communities, including the community of leaders that serves the mission of the church through cultivating the health of its interdependent communities and structures.

⁴ If, as William Temple has said, "the Church is the only society that exists for the benefit of those who are not its members," then the church's thriving cannot be divorced from the thriving of the surrounding community.

Vision

Frederick Buechner has said that “Vocation is the place where our deep gladness meets the world’s deep need.” This is equally true for individuals and for organizations. The Diocese of Kootenay’s vision of its unique vocation needs to be clearly articulated both for itself and for the world.

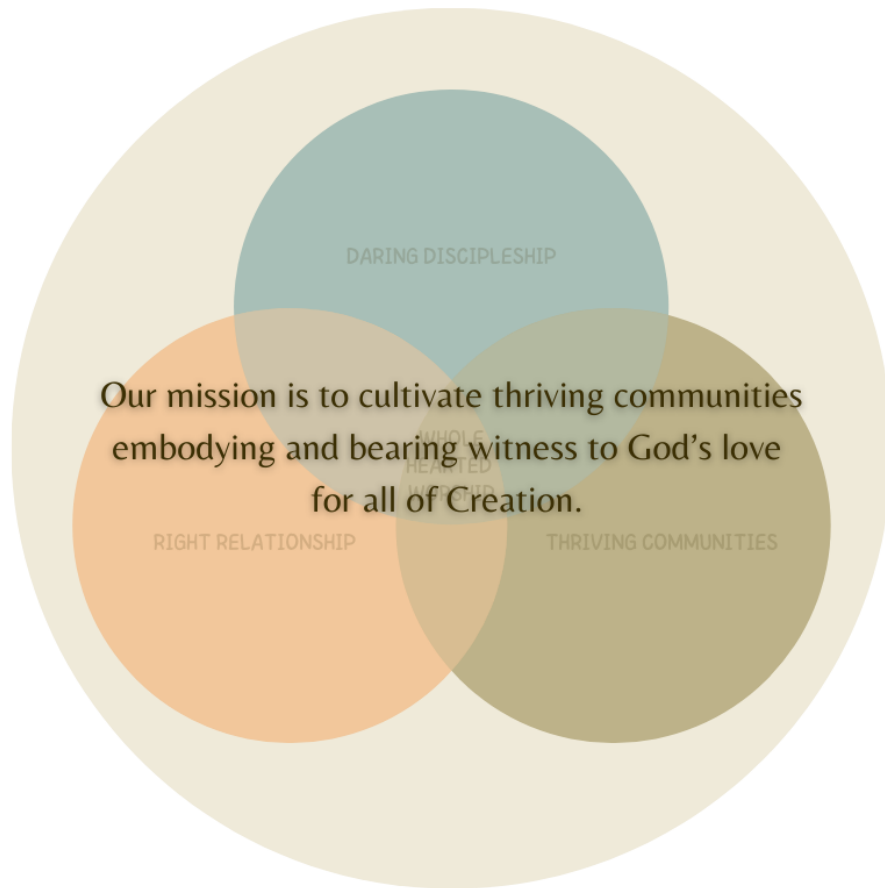
The place where these two intersect is the place where the Diocese of Kootenay may more effectively live out its vocation and serve greater numbers of people experiencing these particular yearnings and needs. With this in mind, the Diocese may consider articulating its vision—deeply rooted in its values—in the following way:



Mission⁵

Even though the geography of this Diocese is vast, we remain united in Christ and in a shared sense of mission expressed in ways as diverse and varied as the individuals, communities, and communities of communities that make up this diocese.

Called by God,⁶ the people of the Diocese of Kootenay seek to faithfully and courageously⁷ journey together⁸ in responding⁹ to the changing needs¹⁰ of our world.



⁵ Recall that *mission* refers to how we achieve the vision. Mission encompasses the things we do (the actions we take, what we speak about, and what we embody) that are consistent with and inspired by our values, in pursuit of the vision

⁶ Our mission is not rooted in our own machinations, but in our participation in and attention to God's present work in the world.

⁷ This moment in the life of our church will require courage as we step out of the safety and comfort of previous assumptions, and respond to the present world.

⁸ Our work and our courage in this moment is something that we do together. Whether in Golden or Kelowna, or Osoyoos, we are all part of this Diocese, and have a shared responsibility for one another.

⁹ Our mission is responsive to the needs of our neighbours, as well as the evolving ministry context. It's important that we acknowledge the reality of our situation, and that this situation will continue to change.

¹⁰ At diocesan Synod in 1966, consideration was given to the proposal that the Diocese of Kootenay be considered an "experimental diocese." This has been lived out in a variety of ways in this diocese, and may be a touchstone narrative in our diocesan story.

Stepping bravely into God's emerging future,¹¹ our mission is to cultivate¹² thriving communities¹³ embodying and bearing witness to God's love for all of Creation.

United in our pursuit of wholehearted worship and daring discipleship, we serve alongside one another in pursuit of right relationship with God, the land, and all people.

Individual communities will express their own unique mission in response to the world's deep needs in their local communities knowing that, as a diocese, we will support one another in pursuing God's mission in these concrete ways:

- Facilitating parish-led discernment processes in service of the following goals:
 - Providing a reality check (where are we now?)
 - Identifying community gifts and the world's needs
 - Setting and prioritizing missional objectives by discerning how God is inviting each community to use its gifts in response to the world's needs
- Providing specific support to parishes wishing to set and prioritize missional objectives through
 - A coordinator focused on facilitating this work
 - Offering focused leadership formation opportunities
 - Compiling, developing and sharing tools for parishes
 - Seeding imagination through examples and case studies of imaginative, possible, and proven ministry transformations

¹¹ The future, while unknown, belongs to God. This reminds us that we do not go alone.

¹² This is no time for the language of decline if we seek some sort of prophetic imagination. Cultivation ought to lead to growth in our fidelity to God, our depth of spirituality, and be open to the possibility of growth in numbers

¹³ The core of our ministry is thriving communities bearing witness to God's love. These communities may look like previously established parochial churches, but they could just as easily look like a cheese shop, a church plant, a community food centre, a land trust, a non-profit housing project, a monastic community, a social enterprise, and so on.