

Inspired by the model of the farmer's co-op, Grace Church in Rice Lake, Wisconsin has designed a project which invites all of the congregations in the Diocese of Eau Claire to participate in a stewardship program in which all of them can share ownership. They will begin with an internet survey to assess the level of stewardship education in the diocese, use this data to design an education plan, schedule a series of teaching sessions around the diocese, select a design team from participating congregations to plan the financial commitment program for the fall and follow up with an internet assessment survey. The goal is to address a significant congregational need collectively and create an environment which facilitates sharing resources (including individual talents) among congregations in a small diocese.

For more information, contact:

Terry Parsons

[tpsteward@aol.com](mailto:tpsteward@aol.com)

EDSConnect Rural Storytelling Project  
The Episcopal Divinity School

As part of the purpose to educate lay and ordained leaders who advance God's mission of justice, compassion, and reconciliation, EDS constantly asks the question of how the story of under-served populations can be told. *EDSConnect*, the EDS team focusing on creating resources and education for existing leaders in parishes, will use this grant to look at the ways technology and education can work together to tell stories. Our primary focus is creating a space where rural parishes can tell the story of the successes they are creating in their midst; our goal is to make their stories visible to each other and to the church as a whole. Our *Rural Storytelling Project* will begin by developing a strategy to post a sample of the many stories of successful rural parishes that we have already accumulated during the taping of our DVD *Ministry Development: A Brief Introduction*, also funded by the Roanridge Trust.

In the fall of 2010 *EDSConnect* will create and run an online course aimed at meeting the needs of leaders of Rural Parishes. *Rural Church: Ministry and Mission for All* will provide an opportunity to explore vital rural ministry. The course and the storytelling web location are both aimed at leaders, lay and ordained, of local congregations, and at the ministry developers, missionaries, and other diocesan and national leaders who support those local leaders. The course will be open to all rural parish leaders and the storytelling website will be accessible throughout the Episcopal Church. We also expect involvement from rural parishes in Canada. We will ask participants to self-identify as members of rural parishes.

For more information, contact:

Liz Magill

Imagill@eds.edu

Rural congregations and dioceses that emphasize baptismal ministry and use local ministry teams are often supported by Ministry Developers. The Ministry Developer's skills overlap with the traditional role of a parish priest but are not necessarily the same. The most important skills for a ministry developer are in system change, transformation of communities by developing their gifts, and the integration of knowledge and process in such a way that it leads to helping the church to evolve to a new way of being. For a ministry developer to use these skills effectively they need to be grounded personally and spiritually, and to have basic skills in communication, small groups work, and the awareness and skills for intercultural dialogue.

The Certificate in Ministry Development is intended to provide a way for a group of learners to explore and expand their skills in ministry development, and to provide information for Dioceses about some of the education a ministry developer has received. This portfolio based certificate asks the participants to show growth in ten areas that are essential to the type of leadership used in ministry development.

For more information, contact:

Faith Perrizo

[feperrizo@wvdiocese.org](mailto:feperrizo@wvdiocese.org)

This Internship program is intended to provide seminarians and recently ordained clergy with an opportunity to test their call to ministry in small churches and rural areas by having a hands-on experience. The participants will receive first hand experience with consistent worship, leadership, preaching, and pastoral care. It will also allow the diocese/ participating congregations to realize some immediate benefits from the program, such as enriched worship life, fresh ideas for approaching mission and ministry, and renewed energy and direction.

The program will partner the Diocese of Eastern Oregon with the Dioceses of Idaho and Northern California and the Church Divinity School of the Pacific. Each diocese will host an intern and provide an experienced clergy person to be a mentor for each of the participating interns.

For more information, contact:

Lee Kiefer

[ikiefer@episdioeo.org](mailto:ikiefer@episdioeo.org)

Our ministry model for rural congregations for 30 years was basically the same. We paid four priests to serve as missionaries facilitating ministry development for total ministry parishes. The missionaries (Regional Vicars) organized the parishes, led group discernments, and oversaw the training of lay and ordained ministries. This model ceased to be viable several years ago when the diocese could no longer sustain the cost of the missionaries.

Our new model is to rely on non-stipendiary lay people to serve as ministry developers, empowering other non-stipendiary lay people for ministry. We will identify and recruit approximately seven lay people to be trained as ministry developers. They will learn about orders of ministry, forms of licensed and commissioned lay ministries, discernment tools, foundational discipleship programs, models of ministry teams, and the basics of preparing people to serve in key church roles.

The goal of our new project is to affirm the authority of the laity to empower each other for lay ministry and to make ordination an outgrowth of lay ministry instead of admission to an elite club.

For more information, contact:

Dan Edwards

[bishop@nvdiocese.org](mailto:bishop@nvdiocese.org)

While "rural" does not always mean small, often it does and small congregations make up nearly half of the worshipping congregations in the Episcopal Church. Increasingly bishops express frustration and helplessness in helping these congregations meet their need for leadership. Data from the Church Pension Fund and The Episcopal Church show two converging trends for the Church in the next decade:

1. A significant number of clergy will retire
2. A significant number of congregations will not be able to afford to pay fulltime clergy

The primary objective of the *New Dreams, New Visions* program is to plant revitalized retired clergy in congregations for whom this leadership can move them into ministry in their communities with renewed vitality. The program will involved an initial assessment, a two week intensive training program, and on-going mentorship.

For more information, contact:

Tori Duncan

[vduncan@episcopalchurch.org](mailto:vduncan@episcopalchurch.org)

In the Diocese of San Joaquin, as in other re-forming dioceses of the Episcopal Church, laity have been cut off from the resources of the church, and persuaded that they have little power or capability to engage in ministry. Chiefly because of the lack of lay leadership role models in this re-forming diocese, congregations in general - and especially those in rural settings - need formation programs specifically targeting the laity.

*Cycles for Leadership* offers an introduction to theological concepts, prayer practice, and aspects of congregational development that will equip laity to serve more effectively as leaders in and for the church.

For more information, contact:

Demi Prentiss

[demipaul@sbcglobal.net](mailto:demipaul@sbcglobal.net)