

The Episcopal Church of Liberia

STRATEGIC PLAN

Adopted at the Special Convention 2019

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Message from the Bishop

It is my pleasure to introduce this Strategic Plan by raising the “what”, “why” and “how” questions. What is this Strategic Plan? Like all strategic plans it is “a systematic process of envisioning a desired future,” a guide to the ministry of the church, reflecting all elements of our work in advancement of God’s kingdom in the Liberian vineyard. Though approached with renewed vigor, the idea has been reflected upon in a variety of ways in the past few years.

Why a strategic plan? We feel the need today, perhaps more than ever before, to infuse the ministry of this Diocese with a renewed thrust. This thrust is occasioned by the need to expand the base and meet the needs of the Church in Liberia. There exists an urgent need to spread the Gospel throughout Liberia and impact unfinished work of reconciliation and healing in our country and the need comprehensively to engage our people in all areas of our common life as a Christian community. This can be done when Episcopalians have a commonly agreed vision and are resolved on a mission to pursue that vision in a targeted manner. This Strategic Plan, once agreed by this Special Convention, will guide the development decisions of the Diocese. It is designed for a period of five years and should be subject to an annual review, commencing Convention 2020.

How will we proceed with implementation? We have worked out a matrix that details who does what, when, and how, and specifies the contemplated outcome. Regular reports and accountability are expected at Diocesan Conventions starting with 2020 Convention.

The Church is being challenged at all its institutional levels to drive this revival and renewal, indeed this new agenda for action. No one is a spectator. All our human and material resources must now be marshaled to expand mission, development work and advocacy, ecumenism, healing ministry, and enhanced economic activity.

As the hymnist Albert A. Goodson reminds us, “We’ve come this far by faith, leaning on the Lord, Trusting in His Holy Word”

So, let us respond to the demands of our times and circumstances. Let us recalibrate. Let us place the same faith at the center of these endeavors as we roll out this Strategic Plan for our work today and in the years ahead.

God Bless us all!

The Most Rev Jonathan B.B. Hart

Bishop
Episcopal Church of Liberia

Our Vision

A vibrant, loving, caring, welcoming and inclusive Christian community; worshipping, living, and serving according to teachings of the Holy Bible.

Our Mission

To win souls for the Kingdom of God through Jesus Christ by means of preaching, teaching, healing, sharing, advocating, and transforming.

We commit, by the grace of God, to the fulfillment of our Mission by striving diligently to achieve the following goals.

Goals

1. Maintain, improve and expand Mission areas and educational institutions. (Preaching, spiritual healing, evangelism, and transforming);
2. Improve and expand existing advocacy and development work beyond its current scope. (Advocacy, spiritual healing, sharing, and transforming - internally and externally);
3. Develop a Diocesan Health Service Program;
4. Strengthen and expand our ecumenical relationships;
5. Enhance economic activities to support the vision/mission of the Diocese.

Goal 1.1

Improve and Expand Mission Areas

Mission Areas were catchments that served to propagate Christianity through preaching, teaching and the development and provision of socio-economic services. Many of these have declined or closed. The objective is to revamp declining areas and expand the mission of the ECL in Liberia. Consequently, the following is agreed:

- i. All churches/congregations should establish and fund a committee on evangelism and that evangelism should include welfare. Each church should report that this has been achieved, by Convention 2020. To be managed by the Arch Deacons. PS-(\$25), Chapels (\$50), Aided Parishes (\$500) Autonomous Parishes (\$1000)¹.
- ii. Each church shall establish or activate, as applicable, children, youth (ages 12 to 18), and young adult (ages 19-25) ministries by Convention 2020. The Diocesan Directors of Christian Education and of Youth Ministry shall develop, make available electronically, and/or circulate hardcopies of recommended programs for children ministry, youth ministry, and young adult ministry to all congregations within six (6) months after adoption of this Strategy. The recommended Programs shall carefully and properly disaggregate and categorize the various age groups. The objective is to harmonize teachings for these three categories of the church's congregation. The Directors shall present a comprehensive progress report on the implementation of these programs at Convention 2020.
- iii. Programs shall be developed to improve and standardize the Christian Education Program of the Diocese to cover churches and all Episcopal schools. The Director of Christian Education is charged with the task of developing such Programs. This should be done within eight (8) months after adoption of this Strategy and submitted to the Bishop and the Diocesan Council for approval before Convention 2020.

¹ References to \$ are to United States Dollars or its equivalent in Liberian Dollars.

- iv. All congregations must have at least one trained and certificated Sunday School Teacher and at least a Youth Ministry Teacher/Advisor by Convention 2022.
- v. The Diocese shall improve and expand lay Ministries (Catechists, lay readers, lay Eucharistic ministers,), so that each congregation has at least one trained lay minister by Convention 2020.
- vi. Liturgical Enculturation (the practice of keeping the best but also incorporating new helpful practices). A special committee appointed by the Bishop shall report on how this should be handled to help fulfill the evangelistic mission of this Strategy and report at Convention 2020.
- vii. Plans for continuous education programs for clergy, with a goal that each clergy should be encouraged to attend at least biannually, shall be developed by the Director of Theological Education and submitted for approval to the Bishop and the Diocesan Council within six (6) months after the adoption of this Strategy. The first of such continuous education programs for clergy should be conducted before or contemporaneously with Convention 2020.
- viii. The Director of Theological Education shall prepare and present to the Bishop, by Convention 2020, a program for the training of more of the current ordained ministers in the area of Theology.
- ix. The Standing Committee, in consultation with the Board of Trustees and the Bishop, shall prepare a plan for the provision of housing for all ordained Clergy. This Plan shall be presented at Convention 2020 and shall include a practical and affordable timeline.
- x. Each church should develop a membership growth plan and growth target. By Convention 2020, each church shall provide the number of active members (i.e. members who give of their time, talent and/or treasure), and a plan to grow by 5% annually.
- xi. To better understand membership decline, the Bishop shall request Cuttington University to commission a study and present a report and a plan to reverse such trend in advance of Convention 2020.
- xii. The Diocese shall establish and maintain a media setup (radio, television stations, newspapers, magazines and other forms of social

media) for teaching and evangelistic purposes. The Communications Office shall be strengthened with a goal of developing and presenting a detailed diocesan media strategy to the Diocesan Council within eight (8) months after adoption of this Strategy. The detailed media strategic plan, after acceptance by the Diocesan Council, shall be presented for adoption at Convention 2020.

Goal 1.2

Maintain, improve, and expand educational institutions of the Diocese.

The Diocese Educational school system policy framework, is to provide quality education for its members, residents and citizens, while also ensuring the establishment, functionality and regulation of teaching and learning based on set standards agreed by the Episcopal Church and in accordance with the Ministry of Education, in meeting the rights of children to access education in Liberia.

The overall Objective is to:

- *Provide guidance on the delivery of accessible and affordable quality education through a system approach, thus increasing opportunities and expansion of Episcopal school facilities across the country.*
- *Contribute to the spiritual and human resource development through the provision of quality Learning-teaching environment for students whose, early learning, primary and secondary educational attainments are compatible to that of international standards.*

To achieve these Objectives, the following activities shall be undertaken.

- i. Canon II D speaks to the establishment of the Diocesan Board of Education. The Members of the Board of Education shall be appointed by the Bishop, in consultation with the Diocesan Council. The appointees shall be persons with sound background and relevant experience in the field of education and child

development. The new Board of Education shall be appointed immediately following the Special Convention and shall make report of its progress at Convention 2020; such report shall include the implementation of the Strategic Plan of the Diocese which shall include the establishment of the **Episcopal Diocese Schools Secretariat**.

Role of the Board of Education (BOE):

The BoE shall promote participation in the design, development and support of the Education policies and programs of the Diocese, paying particular attention to the need to harmonize the current distinction between Diocesan and Parochial schools and how they operate.

In addition to those functions prescribed by the Canons, the Board shall monitor the activities of the **Episcopal Diocese Schools Secretariat (“Educational Secretariat”)**.

ii. Establishment of the Episcopal Diocese Schools Secretariat

The Diocesan Board of Education shall vet and recommend to the Bishop for appointment, the National Director and the Supervisor of Schools of the Episcopal Educational School Secretariat.

These officers of the Educational Secretariat shall be appointed within 90 days after adoption of this Strategic Plan.

Role and responsibility of the Educational Secretariat:

The Educational Secretariat headed by its National Director will perform the following tasks, in addition to others prescribed by the Board of Education:

- a. Develop policies and guidelines for the effective operation of the schools;
- b. Supervise the Episcopal Educational System;
- c. Support and monitor the planning and implementation of school activities such as workshops and other school activities at the regional and national levels;
- d. Assist the schools in resource mobilization;
- e. Supervise schools-related data collection, analysis and reporting;
- f. Be a liaison between the local schools’ board, Ministry of Education, local and international NGOs in the education sector at the national level;
- g. Ensure the provision of pre-service teachers’ training, workshops, learning methodologies, general teaching skills, classroom management and subject related skills training.

- h. Recommend to the Board of Education for endorsement the recruitment and dismissal of school principals in keeping with Episcopal Church Human Resource Policy.
- i. Report to the board of education.

Composition of the Educational Secretariat:

Proposed Officers and Staff of the secretariat:

- 1. Director , (Head of the Secretariat)
- 2. Supervisor of Schools
- 3. Regional coordinators 4 (3)
- 4. Executive Secretary
- 5. Accountant/Finance Officer
- 6. Office attendant
- 7. Drivers
- 8. Securities

iii. Management and Reporting

The Board of Education is responsible for the overall management of the Episcopal Church School Policy Framework.

- a. The Board of Education shall report quarterly to the Bishop and Diocesan Council..
- b. The Secretariat shall report monthly to the Board of Education.

Goal 2

Improve and expand existing advocacy and development work beyond its current scope.

Significant progress has taken place in Liberia since the civil conflict which was characterized by massive disruptions in the political economic, social and

cultural order of Liberia. Since the end of the conflict, however, significant progress has taken place. War has ended, peace has been restored, and institutions of governance reestablished. Laws have been reformed and significant efforts exerted to address post conflict social and economic challenges. However peace is more than the absence of war. There are still a number of challenges facing Liberia that have the propensity to unravel the peace that we enjoy today and potentially relapse the country into another round of conflict.

Firstly, Liberia has not fully reconciled with itself. The political, social cultural and economic challenges that divide us as a people still exist, and may have even exacerbated as a result of the civil conflict. Level of development is inequitable, and so is access to social programs. We are one country but not one people. Many of our people appear to be angry and frustrated and it is this anger that is typical of a volcano boiling underneath waiting for time to explode.

While progress has been made in furtherance of the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedom, there are still a number of human rights challenges that are not conducive to peace and stability. Critical among these is the lack of access to justice. Many are poor and illiterate and do not have the means to access the courts or to hire lawyers to protect or defend their rights when violated or abused. Many of our people are also unaware of their rights and how to assert and demand the protection of these rights. Hence many of our people are suffering in silence. In criminal matters, prolonged pre-trial detentions, delays in trials, and inability of the accused to secure bail, continue to affect in a very disproportionate manner, the poor and illiterate.

Further, and although illegal under the laws of Liberia, rape, gender based violence including in particular domestic violence, remain daunting challenges for women and girls in Liberia. Child abuse, forced and early marriages, and harmful traditional practices continue unabated in spite of exerted efforts by the Government and International Partners. Many children are found daily idling on the streets of Monrovia and in the Counties, some selling goods in traffic between moving vehicles cars at much risk to their lives. Many others, without jobs and not attending school, have resorted to criminality. As the late President William R. Tolbert, Jr. once stated, the children are our precious jewel and the foundation of our future. The situation today does not help create a positive legacy for Liberia.

Finally, the country is at a very high level of poverty occasioned by high levels of illiteracy and unemployment, especially among the youth many of whom

were former combatants not properly rehabilitated and not given opportunity either for formal education or vocational training. Taking together, the aforesaid challenges are triggers for instability and violence, with the potential to derail the level of peace and democratization that has obtained thus far.

While under the Constitution of Liberia, it is the responsibility of the Government to create the enabling environment for peace, economic and social development, the Church has a role to play. The Catholic Diocese of Liberia has stepped forward and over the years have provided services in the area of legal aid and human rights; and the Lutheran Church in the area of refugees and internally displaced. The existing services thus far provided by these institutions do not comprehensively address the challenges that the country faces. There is therefore, a need for the Episcopal Church to enter into this arena.

There are many areas in which the Episcopal Church can intervene and make meaningful contribution and impact. As an initial step, however, the Church shall establish a **“Human Rights, Peace and Justices Committee”** with a mandate to conduct further review of the challenges identified thus far and more, with the view to advancing concrete proposals for approval by the Church .

Towards the achievement of this Objective;

The Bishop should, within 30 days following the adoption of this Strategic Plan, appoint a “Human Rights, Peace and Justice” Committee. The Committee shall submit a Plan of Action to the Bishop, no later than 60 days after its appointment. The Plan, which should be strategic, achievable, and measurable, shall recommend potential sources of funding as well as technical assistance, and focus on, but not be limited to, the following program areas:

- i. Programs for creating awareness and sensitization on Human rights and fundamental freedoms as well as environmental and ecological concerns.
- ii. Programs to provide legal aid to those whose rights are violated and abused and cannot afford counsel. Legal aid can extend to legal services to victims of rape and gender based violence, as well prolonged pretrial detentions and prison conditions.

- iii. Programs to address the plight of children including in particular vulnerable children, and to provide assistance to the poor in certain categories, such as to the blind, aged, and handicapped.
- iv. The Action Plan should propose resource mobilization strategies

Goal 3

Develop a Diocesan Health Service Program.

The Objective of this Goal is to win souls for the Kingdom of God through the healing ministry of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ to be carried out through a Diocesan Health Services Program with all congregations as the prime movers.

This will be achieved by:

- Developing centralized, Diocesan level health priorities supported by all churches, and
- Each congregation identifying and implementing health programs for the members and the host community.

The implementing actions shall be at:

Diocese Level

- a. Diocesan Health Committee (“DHC”), comprising not more than seven health professionals, should be appointed by the Bishop within 90 days after the Special Convention. The Committee shall be chaired by a medical professional.
- b. Diocesan support and partnership with St. Timothy Hospital in Grand Cape Mount County and Phebe Hospital in Gbarnga, in specific health care areas (i.e. care and treatment for children 0-5 years and adults

with Diabetes); and such other areas as the committee shall decide and as resources become available. Engage the Government of Liberia (GoL) and other denominations (Lutherans and Methodists) within three months after the establishment of the committee.

- c. Reactivate within six months and strengthen Episcopal Relief Program's health component including active collaboration with the Ministry of Health, the Christian Health Association of Liberia (CHAL), and other relevant partners in locations predominately Episcopalian. (Strengthening exercise ongoing). Congregation Level.
- d. Establish Health Committee at each congregation, with health professionals or those interested in health.
- e. Hold annual comprehensive health fair within each Archdeaconry (venues to be determined), to include screening for diabetes, hypertension, dental problems and eye problems and create awareness on mental health and physical disabilities. All churches in each Archdeaconry to participate.
- f. Diocesan Health committee to assist congregations to organize quarterly health fair. Ongoing.
- g. The Diocesan Health committee shall explore the possibility of establishing the Diocesan Health Care Fund and recommend the use of the fund.
- h. Secure pharmaceutical donations, and health related materials and supplies for use of the Diocese .from local / international donors and partners (such as LECUSA, TEC, CPWA, etc.)
- i. Create/identify/obtain health literacy materials for use by parishes
- j. Create/obtain materials with basic treatment and referral information in various counties for use by congregations.
- k. Explore the possibility of establishing a group health insurance scheme to cover employees and members of the various

congregations. Committee to provide feedback within six months following the Special Convention.

Congregation Level

- a. Each Congregation to implement a health literacy program, informing membership of various health conditions, what they mean and types of treatment. These to include nutrition (i.e. Pamphlets, posters, include in weekly church program, brief talk during announcements, etc.). Congregation shall report on its activities to the Diocesan Health Committee quarterly.
- b. Quarterly community health program (may coordinate with other churches in the community).
- c. Identify health professionals in congregations and communities.
- d. As congregations are able, select area(s):
 - Monthly/Quarterly medical screening, provision of basic medications and sharing of health information.
 - Health Promotion.
 - Basic treatment / referral programs which offer dispensary of basic medication and information on where qualified medical services are available.

Management and Reporting

- Diocesan Health Committee responsible for strategy and implementation
- Diocesan Health Committee reports semi-annually to the Bishop and at Conventions.
- The Diocesan Health Committee shall convene quarterly.

GOAL 4

Improve and expand our programs on Ecumenism

Understanding that though many parts, we are one body, we strive to increase our service to humankind by improving our ecumenical relationships with other denominations, faiths, and religious organizations. We shall;

- i. Develop guidelines on how Episcopal churches can partner with other denominations in the areas of worship and joint projects such as ecumenical prayer services, relief, and longer projects like Phebe and Gbarnga School of Theology, etc. The Bishop should appoint a special committee to conduct study of current relationships and develop a strategy and plan to make improvement. The report shall be presented at Convention 2020. Start “i” above with the historic relationship, why it weakened, and the need for restoration...
- ii. Review Rules on the participation of non-Episcopal clergy in Episcopal worship services. The scope of the Committee mentioned supra, shall be expanded to include this deliverable with similar timeline.

“The Church’s one foundation, is Jesus Christ our Lord”

GOAL 5

Enhance economic activities to support the vision/mission of the Diocese.

Historically, the annual budget of the Episcopal Church of Liberia was supported by the Episcopal Church of the United States during the missionary period. When the decision was made to join the Province of West Africa, support from the USA Church began to decrease with a plan to move to full fiscal independence by 2022. Since that process started, the Diocese has been supported primarily by returns on investments in real estate and interest from endowments. Unfortunately, with 100% of its real property portfolio being concentrated in Liberia, and declining local economy the Diocese has been hard hit and compelled to rethink its funding sourcing.

This Plan recognizes the need to diversify the investment into sectors that are generally safe, morally sound and present opportunities for achieving our Vision and Mission. Towards this end, three primary areas of investment have been identified.

1. Agriculture,
2. Real Estate
3. Securities,

(1). Agriculture

Blessedly, the Diocese of Liberia has an existing relationship with the Episcopal Relief and Development. Through this relationship, several

agriculture projects have been started around the Diocese. The plan is to now develop upon what is existing in a thoughtful, commercial process. It is, by adoption of this Plan agreed that the

- i. Board of Trustees (“BoT”) sets up an Agriculture Investment Committee of not less than 3 and not more than 5 members, no later than 30 days after the Special Convention. Members of this committee shall be professionals with proven expertise in Agriculture and its related fields, Business, etc.
- ii. Board of Trustees engages the ERD to assume responsibility for all ERD Agriculture pilot projects starting with the Cape Mount Project, no later than 60 days after the Special Convention.
- iii. That the Committee finalizes the Business Plan and obtains approval from the Board to commence the Cape Mount Project no later than 30 days following the formation of the Committee.
- iv. That the Board shall secure and provide funding no later than 30 days following approval of the Business Plan.
- v. That the committee shall commence implementation of the Business Plan no later than 30 days following provision of funding by the Board
- vi. The Committee shall provide monthly reports to the Board.
- vii. The Board shall provide quarterly reports to the Diocesan Council.
- viii. That the management of the investment funds shall be as prescribed by Canon IIE.
- ix. In consultation with the Board, the Committee shall, on an ongoing basis, review possible action for Agro investments in all areas within the Diocese, especially those already started under the ERD pilot program.

(2). Real Estate

Returns from investment in real estate has been the primary source of funding for the operational budget of the Diocese. Though blessed with many ideally located properties, the sharp decline in this sector of the local economy has gravely affected the tenant base thereby eroding the return of investment. Additionally, many of our properties need upgrade due to considering their time of construction and neglect. Nonetheless, the improvement and re-gentrification of the portfolio should increase the attractiveness and lease-ability.

Towards this end,

(i). The BoT shall initiate a process to

- List all properties of the Diocese-documented and undocumented- no later than 60 days after the Special Convention.
- Secure funding to identify and survey such properties. The process shall commence no later than 180 days following the Special Convention, with its first report being made at Convention 2020.
- Catalogue and create effective storage and retrieval systems.

(ii).The BoT, shall, within 90 days following the Special Convention, provide a comprehensive real estate management and investment strategy to the Diocesan Council.

(3). Securities

When the decision was made to become autonomous, the Diocese established an endowment fund (the Baker Plan) that has since been invested and managed by The Episcopal Church of the United States of (“TEC”). In addition to this fund, several dedicated funds were established primarily by donations and for specific purposes. All of these funds continue to be managed by TEC, with interest being remitted periodically to the Diocese for use in funding its annual operational budget. It is believe that it is now time that there is a more active involvement in the management of these funds by the Diocese, through the Board of Trustees, to the extent possible.

To commence this process, it is agreed that;

- i. The BoT shall obtain a listing of all existing investments in securities no later than 60 days after the Special Convention.
- ii. Explore, identify, and initiate competitive alternative investment opportunities on an ongoing basis.

SPECIAL DIOCESAN FUND DRIVE

The current financial position of the Diocese is dire. It is imperative that every Episcopalian goes the extra mile now to resuscitate our church and set it on the path of growth. This will require giving above and beyond what we currently do, stretching our faith in God. This will call for a properly managed, focused, and accountable funding drive that will involve ALL Episcopalians.

No later than 30 days following the Special Convention, the Bishop should appoint a special Diocesan Fundraising Committee, whose role shall be to raise funds. The funds to be raised shall be used to (i) bridge the operational budgetary gap, (ii) implement elements of this Strategic Plan, and (iii) invest. The Special Committee shall submit its fundraising plan to the Board of Trustees within 30 days after it shall have been appointed.

The Board of Trustees shall continue to explore additional areas of investment and encourage all Episcopalians, especially business persons to make suggestions that are sound and within the core values of this Goal.

Plan Duration

This Plan is intended to span a period of five (5) years. While many of the immediate deliverables outlined herein are set for no later than the General Convention of 2020, it is anticipated that the various thematic Plans (based on the Goals), will create practical, measurable, and achievable milestones that are impactful and transforming and can be delivered over the life of the Plan.

There shall be annual reporting on this Plan and a midterm review at Convention 2022.

Management Framework

The current administrative structure of the Episcopal Church of Liberia has the Diocese with four archdeaconries that are further subdivided into regions. The intent, at the time of the creation of these archdeaconries, was that eventually, they would evolve into dioceses under the Church of Liberia. **This Strategic Plan takes cognizance of this intent and encourages the Bishop to, within 30 days following the Special Convention, appoint Special Committee(s) specifically task to commence studies on the feasibility of**

transforming the archdeaconries, in stages, into dioceses. The report shall be submitted at Convention 2020.

Additionally, the Bishop is also encouraged to reconstitute **the Board of Planning and Development**, which shall have the responsibility of managing the implementation of the Strategic Plan by coordinating the activities of the various Boards and Committees, providing timely advice to the Bishop, the Council, and the Convention of potential lapses and threats to successful achievement of the Strategic Plan. No later than 30 days following its reconstitution, the Board shall present to the Diocesan Council, a management and reporting framework developed specifically for this Plan. This framework shall include the specific monitoring and evaluation team or staff. The Bishop is advised to consult extensively when reconstituting the Board.

- While it is recognized that currently, the archdeaconries are not sufficiently established in terms of operational structure, the Bishop and Boards are encouraged, when making appointments, and formulating authority and reporting lines, to include Episcopalians from all archdeaconries.

Charging Ahead

The greatest threat to the successful implementation of this Strategic Plan is lack of commitment from all Episcopalians. The Plan must engender a renewed sense of commitment towards doing God's works and be embraced by all. Our ministries and life purposes as Christians would be enhanced, our congregations seen as a warm, loving and embracing place and our God glorified.

It will require a new kind of thinking with love and service to others being core. Episcopalians will have to see themselves as members of the Diocese of Liberia equally as members of their individual parishes.

EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF LIBERIA

