



FRESH START 2.0

A Resource for Clergy and Congregations in Transition

FRESH START is a diocesan-led program for clergy in new cures and their congregations, which seeks to strengthen the relationships among Episcopal clergy, congregational lay leaders and dioceses during critical periods of transition in clergy leadership of the congregation. This initiative is designed to build the context in which ministry is accomplished in the congregations of a diocese by:

- assisting with the transitions issues inherent in any new ministry;
- sharpening the skills of lay leaders and clergy for congregational development;
- strengthening the collegial relationships among the clergy of a diocese; and
- deepening the trust and interconnection between and among the clergy, the lay leaders of congregations and the bishop/bishop's staff.

Section I.

Introduction to FRESH START 2.0

Purpose of This Introduction:

The purpose of this introduction is to familiarize the individuals from dioceses who will facilitate FRESH START and who will attend a FRESH START training session with this program. It is meant to prepare you for the four day training so that our time together is fruitful. It will introduce you to the FRESH START philosophy, the content of the manual and to the flavor of the facilitator training.

What are the unique challenges presented to clergy and congregations at the time of transition in clergy leadership?

From the time a clergy person announces his/her intention to leave a congregation for another location or form of ministry, until new clergy leadership is in place and established, a congregation is in transition. First, there is saying goodbye, grieving over relationships which will necessarily come to an end and anxiety over what the future will bring. Lay leaders step into new leadership roles. Wardens and vestries take on increased responsibility for the oversight of the congregation.

Another group of lay leaders is charged with the responsibility for finding a new priest. Everyone is a bit confused about who's responsible for what, and who has what roles to play. Small divisions in the congregation often threaten to become sizable fissures, as competing interests vie for position.

In most parishioners' minds, all this anxiety and disruption will thankfully come to an end with the arrival of the new priest. Nothing could be further from the truth. In most cases, the search committee (in some dioceses called a discernment committee or a calling committee) will have set out looking for the

perfect clergy person. They will more than likely believe they have found and made their call to that perfect clergy person. The congregation will have expectations of the new priest which would overwhelm the Messiah himself. And into this situation steps the new clergy leader.

Efforts spent in the early stages of the new relationship help ensure a smoother journey for congregation and clergy.

But the "deployment" process (as it is called in most dioceses) does not end with the selection and calling

of a new clergy person, any more than the “deployment” of a rocket is completed when it leaves the launching pad. For a rocket to be successfully deployed, it must be given sufficient attention in the early phases of its launch, including regular corrections to its trajectory in order to find its appropriate and productive orbit. Similarly with a clergy person and his/her new congregation, considerable effort must be spent in the early stages of a new relationship to help ensure a smooth journey into their new ministry. This might include intentional check-ins, corrections to the trajectory (direction) in which the congregation wants to move and fine tuning the working relationship among the leaders, both clergy and lay.

Why is this an especially fertile time in the life of a clergy person and congregation?

In the early 1990s, Cornerstone, a ministry of the Episcopal Church Foundation, commissioned research from the Grubb Institute to explore especially fruitful “learning moments” in the lives of clergy, congregations and church institutions. One of the most fertile times for learning, identified by the research, was the period of new ministry and mutual adjustment between clergy leadership and a congregation. This should come as no surprise.

For the clergy person, it may signal a first-time setting for ordained ministry: a first call out of seminary, the first time on a multiple-staff team, the first time as rector, or the first time heading a multiple-staff team. Such a change in setting will often signal a move from one size congregation (family, pastoral, program, corporate) to another, where the dynamics of congregational life are very different. If the previous cure has been “successful” and positive, the clergy person may wonder if he/she can “do it again” in a

different setting and context. If the previous cure has been unhappy and disappointing, the clergy person may be desperately looking for a “second chance” to be productive and to undo the mistakes of the past.

For the congregation, there are memories that linger from the last clergy leader and which continue to play a role in the life of the congregation, although he/she has been gone for many months. (This is as true for a beloved former rector, whose shortcomings have been forgotten in the intervening months and who has been placed on a nearly-unreachable pedestal, as it is for a problematic former rector, whose objectionable traits the congregation is determined to “fix” in the choosing of their new rector.) The interim period between the departure of the former clergy person and the search for a new one may have been positive and productive, with the building up of lay leadership. Or, it may have been a period of decline and dissension, or a loss of forward momentum and a feeling of marking time. For almost every congregation, it is a time of discernment about who it is, where it wants to go in the years ahead, what its particular calling or mission is, what it is prepared to do to meet the future, and how it hopes to be transformed in the process.

The dance begins between the congregation and its clergy leadership when the new clergy person arrives. It is a time of heightened sensitivities. Everyone is paying attention. Everyone wants to make a good impression and get this relationship off to a good start, and both clergy and lay people want to express who they are and what they hope for in their ministries. Almost everyone will be full of hope and anxiety about how and how well this relationship will work.

FRESH START is intended to pick up where the interim process ends. It is an opportunity for the bishop and the bishop's staff to offer collegial guidance and support to the congregation, to its lay leaders and to the new clergy person.

How can FRESH START change the context in which ministry is done in a diocese?

FRESH START offers great rewards to all those engaged in ministry and it is an opportunity to affect the climate and context in which ministry is done in a diocese.

The payoff for **the congregations** is multi-layered. The leadership, lay and ordained, is immediately connected to others in the diocese who are experiencing similar transitions. Some of the dynamics and issues inherent in transition are discussed and at least “put on the table” before they occur in the particular setting.

Lay leaders are given intentional access to diocesan staff, provided with some training in congregational development and supported in building the new relationship with the clergy person. Congregations also reap the rewards of their clergy person's quick integration into the life of the diocese. Such an attentive and orderly transition will speed the congregation's passage from a focus on the past, with its former leadership, to a focus on the future, with its new, current leadership.

The payoff for **the clergy** in new cures is dramatic and multi-layered. They are brought into the “culture” of the diocese, becoming quickly integrated with their clergy colleagues. There is the opportunity to reflect with colleagues on the complex and mystifying dynamics being encountered in the new congregation.

There is the opportunity for regular, ongoing continuing education on the dynamics of transition and the elements of congregational development. There is the opportunity to experience the diocesan staff as a trustworthy “resource,” rather than a judgmental hierarchy “breathing down our necks.”

It is difficult to overestimate the impact FRESH START can have on a diocese and its community of clergy and congregations. Such a program mitigates against “lone ranger” clergy, who are “out there, doing their thing” in isolation from other clergy colleagues. Because the community of clergy is strengthened by participation in this program, division into new and old clergy tends not to happen. The use of “critical incidents” encourages the notion that no one is going to get everything right — AND, when things do not go well, it is okay to talk with one another about it.

Some FRESH START programs include mentors for each new clergy person. In those dioceses, the benefit to the diocese's clergy community can be even more dramatic. The use of seasoned clergy as mentors gives them a way to contribute their learnings and skills based on years of experience. It also engages them in ongoing educational opportunities and skill-building, which they might have neglected in recent years.

Likewise, the program helps lay leaders see the “diocese” or bishop's staff as ongoing partners in the call of a new clergy person and new life of the congregation. Instead of ending the relationship with the signing of the Letter of Agreement and a quick visit by the bishop for a “Celebration of New Ministry,” FRESH START keeps and builds upon the connection. This establishes a deeper foundation for

the sense of partnership most lay leaders and bishops hope for in their dioceses.

A successful FRESH START program can be a model of how the bishop and staff can act as a resource for clergy and their congregations. The Grubb Institute research indicates that if the relationship between the bishop (and by extension, the bishop's staff) and the new clergy person is not given time and attention in the first year of service in a diocese, there is little hope of that relationship

developing later. Instead of hearing about a problem in a congregation only after it blows up, a relationship of trust between clergy, lay leaders and the bishop/bishop's staff enables an "early warning system" for troubles on the horizon. "Coaching," rather than damage control, becomes the norm. A program like FRESH START gives the diocese a regular way of being in contact with clergy and lay leaders who are in this very critical stage of their lives and at the time it matters most.

Section II.

FRESH START: A Model

How did this resource/curriculum come to be?

As a result of the Grubb Institute's research, Cornerstone, a ministry of the Episcopal Church Foundation, started working on an initiative which came to be called "Clergy/Congregation Transition: Beginning a New Pastoral Relationship." It was pilot tested and a small number of dioceses adapted its model. Then, in 1998, a new, expanded model was presented at the National Deployment Officers Conference and reaction was extremely positive, with people asking "How can we make this available to other dioceses?" With such encouragement, a partnership was quickly built between three groups (Cornerstone, the Office for Ministry Development at the Episcopal Church Center and the Church Deployment Office), funding was secured and FRESH START began its three-year trial phase (2000-2003).

The original model of a FRESH START program focused on the relationship among and between the clergy entering new cures, the bishop/bishop's office

and a monthly gathering of these clergy in new cures. While that resource did mention ways to connect to the congregation and lay leaders, most of the "how to do that" was left up to the diocesan FRESH START facilitator. Then, at a January 2002 national gathering of those facilitators we heard **two very loud and distinct proclamations:**

- The issues of transition affect the whole church system and all the leaders, lay as well as clergy,

need support, structure and helpful insights to keep the rocket on track; and

- Do not mess with the system of support, relationship building and professional development for new clergy that FRESH START has helped to create in our dioceses.

Thus, with this FRESH START 2.0 version, we are trying to meet the need of the first proclamation without losing the power of the

second. We have included modules and implementation strategies for bringing FRESH

When discussing FRESH START facilitators, we have tried to use the plural throughout this document. We believe that a team approach to facilitation is best, especially if the team includes both male and female, lay and ordained members.

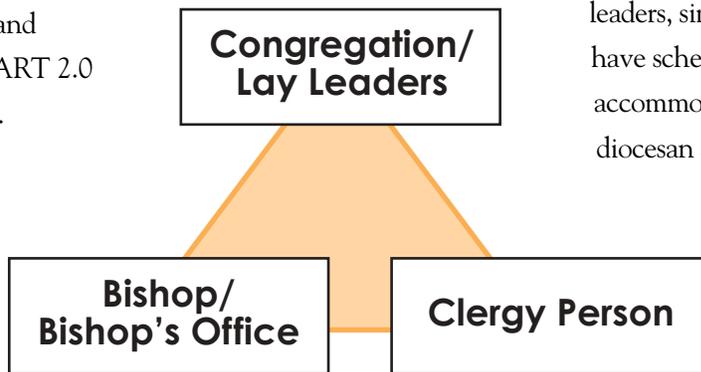
START to lay leaders in the congregation as well as to clergy. The new balance we have sought to achieve reflects this understanding:

Using the diagram, the initial version of FRESH START focused upon the relationship between the Bishop/Bishop's Office and the Clergy Person. With FRESH START 2.0, we have tried to expand the relationship to include all sides of the triangle. The result is thirteen revised modules and three new modules for use with both congregational leaders and clergy: the FRESH START 2.0 manual you are reading.

For whom is the FRESH START curriculum designed?

FRESH START is a resource written for use by diocesan staff and facilitators already skilled in group process, congregational dynamics, and the pastoring of clergy and congregations, who agree to be trained in the use of the FRESH START curriculum. The educational modules are written in a somewhat abbreviated form, assuming a certain level of expertise in the facilitator. Certain basics of group process/facilitation are assumed to be operative and are not spelled out in each module.

It is also assumed that the facilitators of the FRESH START program have considerable credibility with the participants, either by virtue of their position in the diocese (e.g., on the bishop's staff, with responsibility for clergy and/or congregations) or by virtue of their skills as good listeners, lively presenters and able facilitators.



Who is the focus of FRESH START?

Congregations in transition and their leaders, ordained and lay, are the primary focus of FRESH START.

Ordained Leaders are a Focus for FRESH START

The **ordained leaders** are those who have recently been called to a new "cure" or "spiritual charge," as in a pastoral responsibility for a congregation. It is easier to implement the program with these leaders, simply because they often have schedules that can accommodate meetings with diocesan staff and colleagues.

When we speak of ordained leaders or clergy, we mean ALL clergy in new cures, no matter how long they have been ordained. Whether just 30 days out of seminary or a veteran of 30 years in the ordained ministry, a call to a new cure is an important and fertile learning moment in the life of any ordained person and the congregation to which they are called to serve.

This focus on **clergy in a new cure** includes the many shapes and variations of ordained ministry now seen in the church: full-time rectors, vicars, associates, assistants, transitional deacons, part-time clergy, Canon 9 and non-parochial priests. While part-time and bi-vocational clergy present a challenge in terms of the amount of time the clergy person may be able to devote to offerings such as FRESH START, it is important that such an opportunity be extended to all the ordained. Clergy who are moving from one cure to another WITHIN

THE SAME DIOCESE should also be included in this program, since every transition is a “fresh start.” Each situation presents an important challenge and you will want to find ways to support as many clergy as possible in your diocese through FRESH START.

Lay Leaders are a Focus for FRESH START

The second focus is the lay leadership of the congregation. **Wardens and other lay leaders and ministry teams** are invited to participate to help them better understand their role in transition. Work with the vestry (and possibly the search committee) about the stress inherent in any change or transition would confirm both the importance of their clergy person’s investment of time in the FRESH START program and the need for diocesan support for all the congregational leaders. Likewise, a module particularly relevant to the congregation’s situation might be brought to the whole vestry or congregation by a diocesan facilitator, a trained lay facilitator or the clergy person him/herself. For instance, an all-day session focusing on systems theory, role renegotiations or the mutual ministry cycle would be helpful to any vestry. Such a session would give the clergy and lay leaders of a congregation a common language and theory by which to understand and describe the dynamics of the congregation’s life.

We all need to be aware that participation in FRESH START does place unique stress upon lay leaders, their time and energy. This is particularly true after some have undertaken extra responsibilities during the interim period. Nonetheless, we believe it is well worth the effort for the diocese to find the right timing and schedule to incorporate these leaders as much as possible. We will suggest a number of models to help lay leaders strengthen the new relationship with their new clergy person as well as establish and deepen relationships with other lay leaders in similar, transitional settings.

Other Potential Participants

The use of **clergy mentors** with the clergy members of FRESH START includes another important group in the FRESH START focus. Older, more seasoned, clergy are frequently looking for ways to make a difference in the life of the diocese and in the lives of newer colleagues. The opportunity to serve as mentor to a new clergy person is often very attractive to veteran clergy. The mentor elements of FRESH START ensure that veteran clergy will also receive the benefit of the continuing education and reflection which FRESH START provides.

Depending on how your diocese chooses to adapt FRESH START, additional beneficiaries might be the **spouses/partners and families of clergy participants**. Special events for the FRESH START clergy might include the families of participants, particularly when focusing on self-care, on the balance between professional responsibilities and family commitments, and on discussions about appropriate boundaries between personal and professional life. You might have a FRESH START session for lay leaders that includes some discussion about the dynamics which the families of clergy encounter when moving into a new community and a new congregation.

The ultimate focus and beneficiary of FRESH START is the **congregation**. The well-being and competence of the leadership is crucial to the ministry of a congregation. One vital way a bishop and diocese can provide support to a congregation is to guide, support, and educate new clergy in the first two years of their cure. Another way is to ensure that lay leaders receive guidance, support and education during the time of transition. When the relationship between congregation and its new clergy gets off to a good start,

there will be many years of faithful, productive and collaborative ministry.

So, FRESH START's ultimate focus is the health, vitality, mission and ministry of congregations.

How important is FRESH START to the ministry of the bishop?

Bishops have told us that FRESH START has changed the culture of their dioceses. Their Episcopal ministry is enhanced because FRESH START helps

- new clergy enter the diocesan system;
- clergy and lay leaders see the bishop and staff as “partners in ministry” and not “judges” about how well someone is doing; and
- prevent lone ranger clergy.

Here are comments from bishops who have experience with the original FRESH START program in their dioceses and witness to FRESH START's importance to their ministry:

“For over 15 years the diocese has utilized a clergy transition program as one method of introducing new clergy into our diocese and assisting our own clergy in transitions from one congregation to another. Three years ago we were delighted to be introduced to the FRESH START material and methodology. FRESH START has since provided our diocese with tested materials to be shared with clergy in transition and a method of full participation by clergy in transition. It has greatly helped clergy reflect on their new roles in ministry and assisted our clergy in becoming part of a community ... rather than functioning alone.

The Rt. Rev. Henry N. Parsley, Jr.,
Bishop of the Diocese of Alabama

“I think the FRESH START program is one of the best things to come along in years! It enables us to build meaningful, personal relationships early in a ministry and it is a sure step toward helping clergy stay healthy and happy. The various modules are extremely well done and the sharing they encourage among the clergy is powerful and meaningful. The energy that builds during this time together is clearly obvious and it is contagious.

As a bishop, my time there is absolutely invaluable and helps me and the clergy come to know one another in a way no other setting permits. At FRESH START, I always learn things about the clergy and their lives and ministries that are unique and extremely helpful in my ministry to and with them. I sincerely love the clergy of this diocese and these sessions help me express that in a personal way.

I require all newly ordained clergy and those new to this diocese to take part in FRESH START for their own benefit as well as for the benefit of the entire diocese. This approach can help us become more intentional about preventing burn-out and unhappiness more effectively than anything else I am aware of. It is always a time of sharing and laughter and, at times sadness, but always a time of building community in Christ. I love it! “

The Rt. Rev. David C. Bane, Jr.,
Bishop of the Diocese of Southern Virginia

“Before we began FRESH START in the diocese, in theory I believed it to have the potential to transform the clergy leadership in systemic ways. Now, two years into the program, with over thirty clergy involved, I have experienced the results first hand. Some of the comments that have been passed along from participants:

“This is the one thing in my routine that I never miss, it’s just too valuable.” “Being new to the diocese the group gave me immediate connections and allowed me to set up a support group of colleagues that now meets regularly outside of FRESH START.” “FRESH START made me feel immediately connected into the diocese and with a large group of colleagues that were experiencing many of the same problems I was.” “The modules are educational, challenging and especially appropriate to what I’m struggling with in my first time as a rector.”

Within the next five years somewhere between 40 and 70 percent of the clergy in this diocese will have experienced this two year program and its benefits. These benefits are clearly both educational and collegial. FRESH START has been a wonderful addition to this diocese and has fostered my ability to provide clergy and congregations the resources they need to do the ministry to which they have been called.”

The Rt. Rev. John Palmer Croneberger,
Bishop of the Diocese of Newark

“FRESH START has changed the way our diocesan clergy relate to one another from the very beginning of their new ministry. They are more quickly integrated into the life of the diocese, given new and renewed tools for their ministry and find a supportive and caring community in which they can share and learn. I highly recommend this work and program to any diocese.”

The Rt. Rev. Gethin Hughes,
Bishop of the Diocese of San Diego

How important is the involvement of the bishop in FRESH START?

It must be clear to everyone that FRESH START and the facilitators who lead it have the full support of the bishop. The expectation that the ordained and lay leadership of a FRESH START congregation will participate in the program should be built into the deployment process with the vestry and search committee of a congregation, so that this commitment of time by the new clergy person and lay leaders does not come as a surprise. The bishop needs to make it very clear to prospective clergy in the deployment process that, should they be called to this new congregation, it is expected that they will participate fully in the FRESH START program.

This is a perfect time to “sell” the congregation on the benefit to them of their clergy person’s and other lay leaders’ participation. The bishop can also be helpful in holding accountable those people who become “too busy” to attend or for whom participation has become a lower priority.

It is important that the bishop become personally involved in other ways, depending upon his/her style and interests. The bishop will want to be present from time to time for sessions of FRESH START to demonstrate his/her commitment to the program.

Occasionally, this might include an overnight retreat with participants. This will give congregational leaders, new clergy and new clergy families a chance to know their bishop better and vice versa. One suggested module included in this curriculum is for the bishop to lead a session on “the hopes and expectations your bishop has about how we will work and minister together in this diocese.” Such a session may reduce the anxiety of a new clergy person in a new and different diocesan culture. Also, the bishop may hold certain expertise in a particular skill area and may be the perfect presenter for one or more content sessions.

Will FRESH START work in a variety of cultural and ethnic settings?

Our experience with this program, as it has applied to new clergy, has been positive across a range of dioceses, from the homogenous to the diverse. Clearly, FRESH START’s format, process and content will need to be adapted for particular cultural settings. This can be as easy as asking the participants: “What do you think of this (slide, concept, idea, etc.)? Does it make sense in your cultural context?” As one very diverse FRESH START group discussed church size theory, they were asked “Does this make sense in your context?” Many participants reported that the theory made no sense from their cultural perspective. Their experiences, when bounced up against the theory, led to a wonderful conversation and an exceptional opportunity for cultural learning.

We recommend a helpful resource, *A Youth Leader’s Guide to Building Cultural Competence*, by Susan A. Messina, and published by Advocates for Youth

(Washington, D.C., 1994; 202-347-5700, cost: \$20). While it is aimed toward work with young people, it contains most of what should be considered when adapting FRESH START to particular cultural settings. It defines “cultural competence” as moving:

“beyond the concepts of ‘cultural awareness’ (knowledge about a particular group primarily gained through reading or studies) and ‘cultural sensitivity’ (knowledge as well as some level of experience with a group other than one’s own). Instead, cultural competence focuses on the fact that some level of skill development must occur. Being culturally competent is ‘more than being sensitive to ethnic differences, more than not being a bigot and more than the warm, fuzzy feeling of loving and caring for your neighbor.’” (pg. 5)

Thus, we believe cultural competence in using FRESH START will be a multifaceted process. It will not mean simply translating the words of the program. For instance, in one setting we discovered that the very approach of presenting the information as a linear progression was much less effective than a circular model of presenting the material, reflecting upon it in song and prayer and returning again to the concept or theory. Obviously, you know your diocese and cultural settings best and you will need to figure out how to most effectively present FRESH START in your unique context.

Section III.

Custom Designing Your FRESH START Program

As we have mentioned, FRESH START is a resource for congregations and clergy in transition. Thus, FRESH START will have both the clergy person and lay leaders as part of the FRESH START program. The approaches may be different for the two audiences, i.e. clergy schedules during the day are usually more flexible than the schedules for lay leaders. Thus, when incorporating lay leaders into the FRESH START program you will need to be mindful that they are volunteers, and the amount of time they can devote to the program will potentially be less than clergy can give.

In the sections below, we provide some thinking and options for designing and implementing FRESH START for your diocese.

When to start?

The normative use of FRESH START is with a congregation and new clergy person when they begin their new relationship. However, we know that nothing actually “starts” from scratch and some of this material might be helpful before that moment. There are histories and events from the past that affect the relationship.

One approach to working with a FRESH START congregation is to recognize that their “work” on

transition begins with the exit of the previous clergy, entering into interim ministry and going through a ministry discernment or calling process for the new clergy person. As a result, members of the diocesan staff might want to introduce some modules from the program before the new clergy person arrives. Of course, different dioceses have different approaches to interim ministry and the “calling process.” This will affect when and how FRESH START is introduced to the congregation. One of the strengths of FRESH START is its capacity for adaptation to a variety of settings. Here are a couple of ideas for implementation:

- You could write the FRESH START program and expectations of participation into the “calling process” and into the Letter of Agreement that will be used with the new clergy person and the congregation. This addresses resistance before it begins, particularly for “seasoned” clergy who do not think they need this program.
- A FRESH START facilitator could be invited to meet with the vestry and/or search committee before the new clergy person arrives to help them understand “managing transition and change.” This would also help to build relationships between the congregational leaders and the FRESH START team.

- Wardens, search committee chairs and lay leaders from all congregations in transition could be brought together twice a year to discuss how things are going in their “call process.” FRESH START facilitators could use one or two of the modules on exit and entrance issues to frame this conversation. This would also be an excellent opportunity to provide an introduction to the program.

As we noted above, the other, normative time to start is when the new clergy person arrives and you have a new FRESH START congregation with clergy and lay leaders in this period of transition. There are a variety of considerations for how to design FRESH START for your diocese and we’ll look at some in the next section. First, let’s consider some realities about working with lay leaders.

Considerations for Working With Lay Leaders

In thinking about how to best use the time available, you may confront having to make a choice between:

- needing to “jump start” the relationship between lay leaders and the new clergy person in a congregation, and
- giving lay leaders an understanding of foundational theories.

We believe that when the relationship is new, it is probably more important to focus on formation than on learning theories. Later on, informational modules can be introduced, providing a common language to describe what transpires in a congregation. Another approach is to offer the informational modules in regional or diocesan sessions, while using the formational modules in congregation specific consultations. The following models suggest ideas about how to move forward. You will know your diocese, its culture and its congregations best and, thus, are in the best position to design what works for you.

Implementation Strategy:

The following “custom design” suggestions are only some of the ways you might implement FRESH START 2.0 with congregations, lay leaders and clergy. We will go over a more complete “Implementation Checklist” and “Models for FRESH START With Lay Leaders” at the facilitators’ training.



LAY LEADER CUSTOM DESIGN

How do you discern the “right” rhythm for meeting with FRESH START lay leaders in your diocese?

Perhaps the most critical factor will be travel distances. This most likely will determine how often and for how long you will gather lay leaders as a FRESH START group. Many dioceses are small enough geographically for participants to gather in the morning, experience a FRESH START session, and return home the same day. For many other dioceses, such a one-day experience is simply impossible, given the large travel distances. We will work from a “standard” one-day, twice a year model for gathering lay leaders at diocesan events assuming that there will also be a number of sessions held at each FRESH START congregation. We will then suggest variations on that design for dioceses where that is impossible.

Other considerations would include: How many other gatherings for lay leaders are they expected to attend (wardens’ conferences, convention workshops, treasurer workshops; ministry fairs, etc.)? How many congregations are involved in “total common ministry” (or its many variations and designations), and who should be attending FRESH START from these congregations? Is a FRESH START program more likely to succeed on a regional basis or possibly an ecumenical basis, and what are the ramifications for such a program?



ORDAINED LEADER CUSTOM DESIGN

How do you discern the “right” rhythm for meeting with FRESH START ordained leaders in your diocese?

Perhaps the most critical factor will be travel distances. This will determine how often and for how long you will gather as a FRESH START group. Many dioceses are small enough geographically for participants to gather in the morning, experience a FRESH START session, and return home the same day. For many other dioceses, such a one-day experience is simply impossible, given the large travel distances. We will work from a “standard” one-day, once-a-month model, and then suggest variations on that design for dioceses where that is impossible.

Other considerations would include: How many other gatherings for clergy are your clergy expected to attend (clergy conferences, clericus or deanery meetings, clergy and spouses conferences, clergy days, etc.)? What are the expectations of congregations about how much clergy time spent out of the congregation is acceptable? How many of the participants in FRESH START are part-time clergy, and how much time can they be expected to devote to FRESH START, when their positions may involve only one or two days per

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week total? How many congregations are involved in “total common ministry” (or its many variations and designations), and who should be attending FRESH START from these congregations? Is a FRESH START program more likely to succeed on a regional basis or possibly an ecumenical basis, and what are the ramifications for such a program?

All these factors suggest modifications of the “standard” model and rhythm of FRESH START. The benefits of the FRESH START program can be realized in a variety of settings and using a wide range of time frames. No diocese should feel deterred from reaping the rewards of such a program merely because the logistics appear at first to be daunting. One of the benefits of the training which is offered for FRESH START facilitators is the assistance offered in custom designing the program for your diocese and strategizing for its success.

“Standard” one-day, twice a year meeting design

The “standard” model assumes that lay leaders and clergy participants can gather, meet and return home in one day. It also assumes that these gatherings will occur semi-annually.

The suggested meeting outline:

1. Gather and refreshments
2. Worship
3. Community building
4. Education module (information, formation)
5. Lunch, fellowship
6. Building a FRESH START community of lay and ordained leaders

“Standard” one-day, once-a-month meeting design

The “standard” model assumes that clergy participants can gather, meet and return home in one day. It also assumes that these gatherings will occur monthly, with or without a summer break.

The suggested meeting outline:

1. Gather, refreshments and tour of facility
2. Worship
3. Rebuilding the community; catch-up
4. Education module (information, formation)
5. Lunch, fellowship
6. Building a community of colleagues
 - a. Critical incident process
 - b. Support group

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One-day time frames

Depending upon travel distances, more or less time can be carved out of a day for FRESH START. A longer period of time provides for a more in-depth process and consideration of topics. On the other hand, a shorter period of time may make the program more accessible for clergy and lay leaders alike. Following is one possible time frame.

Beginning and ending times can be adjusted to later/earlier in the day. See also the models for the clergy gatherings for other ideas.

Five and a half hour time frame:

- 9:00 Gather, refreshments, tour
- 9:30 Worship
- 10:00 Community building exercise
- 10:30 Module
- 12:30 Lunch, fellowship
- 1:30 Building a FRESH START community of lay & ordained leaders
- 2:30 Go in peace

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One-day time frames

Depending upon travel distances, more or less time can be carved out of a day for FRESH START. A longer period of time provides for a more in-depth process and consideration of topics. On the other hand, a shorter period of time may make the program more accessible for clergy and congregations alike. Following are two possible time frames. Beginning and ending times can be adjusted to later/earlier in the day:

Four and a half hour time frame:

- 9:30 Gather, refreshments, tour
- 10:00 Worship/rebuilding community exercise
- 10:30 Module
- 12:00 Lunch, fellowship
- 1:00 Building a community of colleagues (critical incident/support group)
- 2:00 Go in peace

Five and a half hour time frame

(offers extended worship, community building and module time):

- 9:00 Gather, refreshments, tour
- 9:30 Worship
- 10:00 Rebuilding community exercise
- 10:30 Module
- 12:30 Lunch, fellowship
- 1:30 Building a community of colleagues (critical incident/support group)
- 2:30 Go in peace

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Variations on the one-day “standard” design

Various factors may make the standard session impractical and any number of variations are possible. Some possibilities might be:

- Extend the one day meeting to include dinner
- Meet semi-annually but with an overnight session
- Meet more often (every eight weeks, quarterly, etc.) for a three hour evening session

Whatever the variation, several things should be kept in mind: The “flow” of the sessions, no matter how long, should follow the “standard” model. That is, there should always be a period of gathering with prayer/worship, re-building/reconnecting to the community, catching up on what has taken place since the group last met; teaching/learning modules of information and/or formation; building the community of leaders through sharing experiences and insights; and time for informal fellowship. The multi-day, overnight sessions could do some intentional and thorough community building at the beginning, followed by *several* teaching modules, and interspersed with critical incident or support group sessions.

Building a community of leaders

The very nature of the different lives clergy and lay leaders live make the idea of building a sense of community and collegiality among the clergy more possible. However, we believe it will also be

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Variations on the one-day “standard” design

If travel distances prohibit meeting on a one-day, once-a-month basis, any number of variations are possible. The general rule of thumb would be: the less frequently the group meets, the longer it needs to meet each time. Some possibilities might be:

- a) Once every six weeks or every other month, with several overnight sessions
- b) Quarterly 3 day/2 night overnight sessions
- c) Semi-annually 4 day/3 night sessions

Whatever the variation, several things should be kept in mind: The “flow” of the sessions, no matter how long, should follow the “standard” model. That is, there should always be a period of gathering with prayer/worship, re-building/reconnecting to the community, catching up on what has taken place since the group last met; teaching/learning modules of information and/or formation; building the community of colleagues through critical incidents and/or support groups; and time for informal fellowship. The multi-day, overnight sessions could do some intentional and thorough community building at the beginning, followed by *several* teaching modules, and interspersed with critical incident or support group sessions.

Building a community of colleagues

A significant part of the FRESH START process is the section of the gathering (no matter the length of that gathering) known as “Building a Community of Colleagues.” This activity is at

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helpful to introduce the concept of collegiality with the lay leaders.

Within the same congregation, there is the ability to strengthen the “ministry team” of lay leaders amongst themselves as well as with the new clergy person.

Beyond the individual congregation, there is the ability to connect with other leaders from congregations in similar situations. This also will link the diocesan staff to lay leaders. Everyone will have a new sense of being a part of a diocese through interaction with new colleagues who are also in transition.

Building community in either setting, among leaders within a congregation or among leaders from various congregations, might follow a number of options:

- Lay and ordained leaders might meet separately to discuss a “case study” or share insights about transition issues.
- Lay and ordained leaders might meet together and share a “case study” or discuss an issue of transition.
- Lay and ordained leaders might meet separately to discuss the same “case study” presented from the lay and ordained leaders point of view. Then, the groups come back together and discuss their different “takes” on the same incident.

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the heart of our understanding that the real product of the FRESH START program is the community which is established among the clergy and between clergy and diocesan staff. While the entire experience of FRESH START is meant to contribute to the sense of community, the last part of any gathering is particularly focused on this aspect.

In working with clergy in transition, we have utilized two different approaches to accomplishing this community building task: “critical incident” and “support group.” While the names we use for these two approaches imply something different, in reality they are very similar.

The “critical incident” approach asks a participant to come prepared to talk about some situation (current or recent) in the congregation which presents the clergy person with an ongoing dilemma of some sort. The presenter has 10-15 minutes to describe the situation, the players, the issues, and the feelings and questions raised in the presenter by this situation. By asking questions, the group then focuses NOT on the other players, but on the clergy person’s ability to function in relationship to them. This process acknowledges in an intentional way the fact that, “The only person that I can change is myself.” And, “The best thing I can do in any given situation is to get my own act together.” The goals for the critical incident process are to open up possibilities for the

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The design for building a sense of community among lay leaders will vary from diocese to diocese. It is important for all leaders to understand they are establishing relationships which help strengthen the Christian community and build up the Kingdom of God.

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presenter to see the situation in new ways and to explore a variety of possible actions which might be taken. It is not group problem solving.

The “support group” model sees this community building time as a chance to ask in an informal, less structured way, “So, how’s it going for you as you transition into this new ministry setting?” The time is very open-ended, and there is an opportunity to explore personal as well as professional issues. No particular person is the “assigned” focus for these sessions, and therefore any participant can feel free to share an issue. It is important that the diocesan facilitators monitor how much air time is being used by individual participants, so that no individual is overlooked and no individual is allowed to dominate the group’s time on a regular basis. It should be made very clear that in the use of the words “support group,” this time is NOT group therapy. The support group is meant as an opportunity for colleagues to share among themselves the trials, tribulations, joys and successes of ministry with congregations, and in so doing, to create an ongoing community of caring, supportive and connected colleagues.

In both of these approaches, personal as well as professional, issues are named and explored. And in so doing, a spirit of trust, shared vulnerability and common mission is built among the participants. The resulting community pays off in the life of the individuals, the congregations and the diocese. In addition to these two models, diocesan facilitators

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are encouraged to create their own appropriate way of “building a community of colleagues” which fits the style and needs of participants.

Confidentiality Guidelines

Given the nature of these gatherings clear guidelines about confidentiality must be established. There is no “right answer” to what the guidelines should be but whatever they are, they should be understood and subscribed to by every participant. Violations of the confidentiality guidelines should be dealt with immediately and publicly, that is, with the community for whom this is a shared responsibility. The responsibility for keeping these norms lies with the entire FRESH START community, not just with the diocesan facilitator.

One observation: don’t ask participants to maintain unnecessary confidentiality on all aspects of the program. For instance, asking participants to pledge absolute confidentiality about the gathering would, strictly speaking, forbid them to refer, even in general terms, to the content of the teaching modules or the subject of critical incident, support group and informal conversation between participants. This would be an unnecessary and nearly impossible task. Better guidelines would instruct participants never to refer to anything personal said during the program without first receiving the permission of the person involved, and never to relate the content of a conversation which would in any way identify the person who said it. Such guidelines create some safety, without making the confidentiality standard impossibly high.

Section IV.

Other Decisions You'll Need to Make

How long a tenure should each participant have in FRESH START?

It is recommended that participants engage in a two-year tenure in FRESH START. (No program should operate with less than a one-year minimum commitment from its participants.) A two-year time frame gets the leadership through and beyond the “honeymoon,” if there ever was one. It allows for a larger body of information/formation modules to be presented to each participant. It gives the clergy participants who have been in the program for a number of months a chance to get very good at the process and be of immense help to those just coming on board. This is less likely if people are rotating off after just one year.

What about including clergy mentors for FRESH START clergy in the program?

Providing mentors to clergy participants in new cures has proven highly successful and advantageous in some dioceses and may be something you want to consider. When the clergy person arrives at his/her new cure, the bishop and FRESH START coordinator assign a mentor who seems appropriate in terms of temperament, experience and willingness to serve. In pairing clergy in a mentor/mentee

relationship, one might consider the size of congregations served, similarity in position (an assistant might be assigned as mentor to a new assistant), and personality or temperament (might these two people “click?”).

Expectations of mentors should be clearly spelled out. Should mentors attend FRESH START sessions along with new clergy? (This involves veteran clergy in helpful continuing education and is highly recommended!) Are mentors expected to meet with their mentees on a regular basis? What kind of ongoing contact is expected?

Occasionally, the mentor/mentee relationship does not work out. This is usually because one or the other simply is not committed to it. If it is the mentor who seems disinterested, the diocesan facilitators might suggest that this does not seem to be the time in this person's life for such a ministry and end this arrangement. If it is the new clergy person who seems disinterested, this would be a pastoral opportunity to check in with the participant. (The unsuccessful nature of the mentor/mentee relationship may only be a “bad fit.” It may also be a symptom of a much more troubling and important problem.)

What about a FRESH START “point person” for the congregation?

Each FRESH START congregation might want to have a skilled lay person designated as their FRESH START point person for the program. If a diocese decides to use this kind of system, the point persons from each congregation would be trained to bring some of the FRESH START content back to the congregation. In this way, the FRESH START congregation could have both a clergy and lay member able to introduce FRESH START to the congregation, offering a model of shared clergy-lay leadership. It would be important for this lay person and the clergy person to have mutual trust, respect and a willingness to work together.

When should new participants enter the program?

When initially conceived, FRESH START was designed to deal with “classes” of clergy participants. That is, beginning on a given date and running for a set time. Every clergy person new to the diocese who arrived after that date had to wait for a new “class.” We quickly learned that such a schedule was inadvisable. Someone who arrived at their new cure and just missed joining a class would have to wait months before beginning the program with much valuable, fertile time lost. After such a long wait, many clergy doubted their need for such a “transitions” program. We believe this is true with FRESH START 2.0 and lay participants as well.

It is recommended that clergy participants (and their mentors) and lay leaders begin FRESH START as

soon as they are together in their new relationship, and count their two-year period of participation from that date. If your program has an ongoing group meeting on a regular basis, you could facilitate the

entry of a new member into that ongoing group by using an informal “gateway” orientation. A “veteran” of the group could introduce the new member to the format, ground rules, confidentiality standards and general expectations of the program, prior to the participant’s first meeting with the group.

A congregation might have a lay FRESH START “point person” to help introduce the program.

The obvious advantage of offering the program to “classes” of participants is that there is a beginning and ending of participation. Certain modules can be done “at the beginning,” and the facilitators can be certain of which modules the participants have clearly grasped, depending upon when they started. With the “begin immediately” approach, there is a constantly rotating clientele, and the facilitators will need to be especially aware of and sensitive to which modules are being offered when. A few of the modules (e.g., general issues of transitions, systems theory) may seem basic enough to bear repeating, even if it means a “review” for those who have already experienced them.

Where should the sessions be held?

There are advantages and disadvantages to meeting in the same or different locations. The consistency of meeting in the same location offers several possible benefits. The location chosen can be central, thereby equalizing the amount of time spent in travel by participants, not putting too great

a burden on anyone. Meeting in a regular place makes logistics (room setup, ordering lunch, having audiovisual equipment handy) more easily manageable and predictable. Participants will quickly learn how long it takes to drive the distance from their homes to the regular meeting place, and there can be little excuse for misjudging the driving time. There is a lowered anxiety with the “no surprises” of a regular meeting place.

On the other hand, there are advantages to meeting in the various churches where the participants are doing ministry. As the participants get to know each other and hear one another’s trials, tribulations and joys in their ministries, it is extremely helpful for their colleagues to have a visual image of the context in which that ministry is taking place. Life in a tiny, struggling, poor congregation, in which the part-time vicar and senior warden are doing virtually everything out of a storage room, is a far cry from that of the rector of a multi-staffed, well-resourced, wealthy, suburban congregation. Just SEEING the difference is a great reminder about the variety of contexts in which clergy and lay leaders are called upon to live out the gospel and minister in God’s Name.

This latter, “roving” approach to location, also has its disadvantages. No one is ever quite sure about how long it takes to get to “St. Swithin’s by the Swamp,” and late arrivals are a price to be paid. If St. Swithin’s is located at one end of the diocese, the travel time for a person who lives in the opposite end of the diocese may be nearly prohibitive. The FRESH START facilitators will probably need to bring their own audio visual equipment, newsprint/markers and other supplies along. Ordering lunch for participants may prove adventuresome in certain remote locations.

Still, even with all these complications, nothing takes the place of participants seeing with their own eyes the various settings for ministry in the diocese. And, in some dioceses, it may be the only opportunity individuals have (or take) to see congregations in the diocese other than their own or those nearby.

Is there any advantage to holding sessions at the diocesan office?

For some dioceses, the diocesan office is in a central location. In other dioceses, it may be the least central of all possible locations. While the diocesan office may be the easiest location for the facilitator, if he/she happens to be on the bishop’s staff, it may not be the most convenient in terms of size, parking, informal gathering opportunities, etc. This will vary from diocese to diocese.

However, the diocesan office should **occasionally** be the location of the FRESH START meeting.

Diocesan leadership usually assumes that everyone — especially clergy — are familiar with and comfortable around the diocesan office. However, this may not necessarily be the case, especially if the clergy person or lay leaders are not actively involved in the committees, commissions and decision-making bodies of the diocese. **Holding occasional FRESH START sessions at the diocesan office may help lessen the perception of “distance” felt by so many congregations and clergy toward their diocesan structures and staff.** Such a session should definitely include a tour of the facility, showcase the resources of the diocese and allow a face-to-face introduction to staff members if they are present. (Remember, a Saturday tour for lay leaders might miss key staff members.)

One additional note: This occasional visit to the diocesan office is also a visit to the “Office of the Bishop.” No one is more critical to the clergy-bishop and warden-bishop relationship than the bishop’s administrative assistant. This would be an ideal time for the bishop’s administrative assistant to sit with this group of new clergy or clergy and lay leaders and describe how he/she performs the appropriate function of maintaining the bishop’s calendar, scheduling appointments, or getting word to the bishop in times of emergency.

What if the facilitators don’t feel qualified to lead some of the modules?

While the formational and informational modules in this curriculum are designed to be led by non-experts, no facilitator will feel equally comfortable “teaching” all the educational modules. Presumably, every facilitator has demonstrated expertise and skill in certain areas and will feel more than competent to lead sessions on those topics. But what about those subjects about which the facilitators know little?

Facilitators should recognize that there is a wealth of knowledge and expertise in the participants. Your role may often be to facilitate the conversation and the sharing of that knowledge. Calling in additional resources and specialists is certainly acceptable and it offers the opportunity to hear a new voice. The bishop will have expertise and interest in certain areas and may have the time to lead a session. Other diocesan staff members may be a terrific resource. Certain clergy and lay persons in the diocese may have a particular area of expertise that can be

tapped. Neighboring dioceses offer the possibility of diocesan resources who might be willing to help at little or no cost (except your reciprocal assistance with their program). Trained spiritual directors and retreat leaders may provide needed resources for formational modules on spirituality. A specialist might be brought in for an extended overnight session on a particular topic.

If FRESH START material is brought to a congregation, the diocesan facilitators might be the people to present the material. Or, the diocese may have a team of trained consultants and any one of them could bring various FRESH START modules to a congregation. Or, you could have the lay FRESH START point person for the congregation and the clergy person jointly present the material. It is important that whoever is facilitating this material be trained both in the content and philosophy of the program and wherever possible have the opportunity to experience the program before facilitating it.

Be a Guide on the Side, Not a Sage on the Stage

However, in every case, remember that the “product” of the FRESH START program is more about building relationships than getting theoretical information

into people’s brains. Yes, the topics are important in the time of transition, but they are meant to be used to launch conversation and to encourage the shared expertise of the participants. Thus, most facilitators are more a “guide on the side” and less a “sage on the stage.”

Can my diocese afford this program?

FRESH START is designed to be affordable by any diocese that has a commitment to its purpose. The program should be doable by small dioceses with few financial resources, as well as by larger, more financially capable dioceses.

For those dioceses on a small budget, FRESH START can be done with a committed facilitator (someone already on the bishop's staff or a skilled volunteer), minimal resources and supplies (newsprint, markers and tape). For those with access to greater financial resources, "bells and whistles" can be added: presentations done on overhead transparencies or by computer projection, guest presenters and experts, lunch and refreshments, and overnight accommodations paid for by the diocese, etc.

For the most part, everything you need to launch and maintain FRESH START is provided in this curriculum and at the training session for facilitators. All you need to add is a healthy dose of commitment and excitement.

What additional activities might support the work of FRESH START?

Activities Within a Diocese:

The bishop and bishop's staff (especially the facilitator) should look for opportunities to build the relationship with new clergy and their congregations. The "Celebration of a New Ministry" is an obvious possibility, but so is any preaching occasion, services of reconciliation and healing (especially true for congregations in which there has been some breach of trust with the last clergy person or situations of congregation conflict). Leading a vestry retreat is a great way to deepen the trust and respect between diocesan staff and lay leaders. Participation in ordinations, congregation anniversaries or special

events demonstrates a commitment to the relationship far beyond the confines of FRESH START. Special attention should be given to leaders in, or clergy who have been called to, congregations whose previous clergy person had an especially long tenure, who've experienced some sort of trauma, or who've experienced some breach of trust by their clergy or a lay leader.

The diocesan staff and facilitators should also recognize and capitalize on the opportunity for "coaching" clergy and lay leaders. This opportunity only comes as a result of deepening trust. It occurs when the clergy person or lay leader regards the facilitators as resources, rather than judges, and feels comfortable calling up and saying, "I think I'm beginning to get into some trouble here." or, "I'm just not sure what to do next?" and asks, "Can we just talk this through together?" The reward is that the bishop and staff persons learn about difficult situations *before* they turn into disasters, where little is possible beyond damage control. The situation becomes a shared opportunity, all because a trusting relationship was built *before* such a problem presented itself.

Activities With Families of FRESH START Clergy Participants:

Since FRESH START is about relationships and working to support the whole system, we must also recognize that clergy families (spouses, partners, children, parents, etc.) are also experiencing challenges due to the transition. Various modules make references to some of these dynamics and the facilitators will want to encourage the clergy and lay participants to reflect upon the impact of the time of transition upon the family. Some broader concepts to keep in mind can include:

- There will be expressed and unexpressed expectations of clergy family members.
- The clergy family is in transition, as well, because they are leaving schools, jobs, friends, church communities and perhaps extended families.
- The clergy family may not have moved with the clergy person so transition can change the shape of the household for some period of time.
- The clergy family members have to re-establish relationships, and as a result the transition period can be very isolating. What support might be helpful?
- Family members may have a need to express who they are and what they want in this new context.
- Family members probably have anxiety about the new relationships in the congregation too.
- There may be value in inviting the new clergy family members to a diocesan orientation.
- Are resources and/or a support system for families available? Is there someone who know the ropes?
- There may be a member of the diocesan clergy family network who feels called to shepherd clergy families in transition. An invitation from the bishop to help the program in this way might be helpful.
- Where are there other opportunities to explore family issues beyond FRESH START? Where could clergy families or lay leaders and their clergy talk about expectations of the clergy and their families. For instance, in church size theory there are different expectations about the investment of time of the clergy person and of the clergy person's

family. Depending on that time commitment, what is the cost to the clergy person? What is the cost to the family?

If you choose to include family content in your program, it is very important to be as inclusive as possible. "Family" does not look the same for all clergy persons.

These are just some ideas for including family concerns in your FRESH START programming. Depending upon the make-up of your group you may want to be more intentional about these kinds of considerations.

Activities With FRESH START Facilitators:

While FRESH START facilitators often say, "The thing I look forward to most

each month is working with the FRESH START group," it is also important to support and nurture the people who are doing this work as facilitators. This manual and the four day training for facilitators are the start of what we hope will be a collegium of church people committed to this work and ministry. Connecting those people through a listserv; through the FRESH START coordinator's office; and through periodic national or regional gatherings will also feed the souls and minds of you, the facilitators. Whenever possible, share some of YOUR stories; some of YOUR nuances in using a module; or adaptations to the program. Let's build the program up from our collective experience at the local level.

Encourage your bishop and other staff to check-in with the FRESH START team on a regular basis and see how things are going and how the team is doing. This is glorious work and it is deep work. Just as the body needs a massage now and then, so too do the working bodies, minds and spirits of the facilitators.

Section V.

Overview of FRESH START's Training Modules

With this FRESH START 2.0 version, almost half of the modules are written with an intentional approach that will allow them to be used with FRESH START lay and clergy leaders. The need for this approach to these modules came from FRESH START facilitators and groups from around the country who said, “We could use some help talking about ...”

The modules can also be used with other groups in the FRESH START congregation: helping an altar guild understand an issue, or the Christian Education committee working with the new curate, or the vestry learning about role renegotiation. We have identified which of the modules we believe might be most helpful to FRESH START lay leaders and congregations.

Attention to Content and Process

The training modules in the FRESH START curriculum focus on both the content which is being imparted to participants, and the process, whereby the session is implemented. Inattention to one will usually sabotage the other. Because of the subject matter, some modules focus more on intellectual, informational content, while others have a greater focus on process, discussion and formation.

“**Informational modules**” present thoughts, theories, constructs, teaming and learning tools designed to deepen participants’ understandings of congregational dynamics and their roles in them. Family systems theory, for instance, provides a common lens through which we can better “see” how a congregation tends to operate and live out its life, and how its leaders, especially the clergy leader, can affect and be effected by it. Participants may not always agree that these are accurate pictures of what

is taking place in a congregation or why, but these theoretical constructs, based on years of observation, give us a starting place from which we can better describe and understand our present realities. This means that disagreement and sharing of alternative models for any module can lead to a richer conversation.

“Formational modules” invite participants to reflect on broader themes of ministry and community relationships. Participants get to reflect upon their motivations for making the work of the gospel the center of their lives.

Participants, both ordained and lay, will find that these modules offer time and a sympathetic community within which to explore the sacrifices and delights of ministries. Particular attention is given to the never-ending challenge of finding and moving toward a balance in their lives between:

- a) their ministry in their congregations and communities;
- b) their spiritual lives;
- c) their relationships with family, friends and people outside their congregations; and
- d) their self-care.

The Authors' Voice

In writing these modules, it has been our intent to be both informal and “familiar” in our instructions, more like a phone call from someone you consider to be a reasonably trustworthy and experienced resource. “We” will address “you,” as if you’ve called us up and asked, “Do you have any ideas about how to present such and such?” Our shorthand approach assumes your competence in small group process, as well as your general knowledge of, experience with

and appreciation for congregational dynamics. We will also assume that you LOVE working with clergy and congregations (as we do). If you don’t, we highly recommend that you find someone else to facilitate this program!

Module Design

Each module will follow a similar design. Once familiar with the pattern, the flow of the modules will seem like “home,” and within that pattern, you will feel increasingly comfortable modifying and adapting the modules to your specific needs. Each module will contain:

1. A statement of purpose
2. A biblical text or theological understanding which supports the module
3. Desired results
4. Implementation – this section is added when the module can be used with several different audiences.
5. The session’s actual teaching content and process, whether formational or informational
6. Optional end-of-module reflection for participants to give you feedback
 - a. In this session, I learned/re-learned...
 - b. What I found helpful/unhelpful in this session...
 - c. What else I need...

Section VI.

The Training Modules

Think of the 28 training modules as a “menu” of potential content — a series of invitations to learning and reflection for the participants in your FRESH START program. With your bishop, staff colleagues and/or representative participants, plot out a schedule of content that makes sense for the leaders in the FRESH START congregations in your diocese.

We should also note that many of the modules “overlap.” That is, in some ways the theme of every module is “working in the context of transition and understanding the dynamics of change and transition.” So, we are often looking at this common theme through the different lens of each module. For example, “Exit and Entrance” looks at transition issues through a slightly different lens than “History Taking” or “Understanding Transition and Managing Change.” Indeed, each of those modules might refer to the same William Bridges theory on understanding transitions (Endings, Neutral Zone and Beginnings) but is coming at that theory through a particular aspect of clergy and congregational life. Likewise “systems theory” language can be found in a number of modules, not just the one titled “Systems Theory: A Lens for Looking at Congregations.” We believe this “overlap” is appropriate and helps people see the broader context of the work they are doing together.

In the next section we will note some of this overlap as a cluster of modules.

Six modules are listed as “**Foundational.**” That is, these modules are important in giving participants a necessary introduction to issues of transition and a common language by which they can be described. The rest of the modules are more general and offer a broad range of topics to be dealt with.

From time to time, we have found it helpful to ask FRESH START participants what they are interested in learning about and upon what they would like to reflect. They know better than anyone else the gaps in their own knowledge, experience and expertise. In fact, a number of the modules offered in this curriculum (“Vestry Retreat Design,” “The Mutual Ministry Cycle” and “Spiritual Care and Support of Leaders in Ministry” for instance) originated with requests from FRESH START lay and clergy participants themselves. When setting up a new FRESH START program in a diocese, consider asking the lay and ordained leaders in congregations who have had a new call for their ideas: What would have been helpful? What bumps did you encounter and what discussions might have made the bumps less jarring?

Foundational Modules

(listed in suggested sequential order)

- OL Getting to Know You for a Clergy Group
- LL OL Getting to Know You for a Mixed Group, Lay and Ordained
- LL OL Exit and Entrance: Patterns, Emotions and the Wilderness
- LL OL Systems Theory: A Lens for Looking at Congregations
- LL OL History Taking and Understanding
- LL OL Understanding Transition and Managing Change

General Modules

(listed alphabetically)

- OL The Bishop
- LL OL Conflict Awareness
- LL OL Conflict and Church Size
- LL OL Congregational Development 101
- LL OL Decision Making: Style and Clarity
- LL OL Goal Setting for Effective Ministry
- LL OL Importance of Family and Friends
- LL OL Models of Leadership and Authority
- LL OL Mutual Ministry Cycle
- LL OL Power, Influence, Authority and Control in the Congregation
- OL Profile vs. Reality
- LL OL Reinventing Leadership
- LL OL Roles: Clarifying Roles
- LL OL Roles: Habits, Norms and Expectations
- LL OL Roles: Understanding the "Pinch" and Renegotiating Roles
- LL OL Spiritual Care and Support of Leaders in Ministry
- OL Spiritual Formation in Transition
- OL Strategies for Achieving Personal Balance
- OL Strategies for Organizing Your Professional Life
- LL OL Understanding Church Type
- LL OL Understanding Stress and Burnout
- LL OL Vestry Retreats

Section VII.

Using the Modules

CLUSTERS

We think some modules might work well together. At the same time, we want facilitators to have the flexibility of the “menu” approach to choosing what modules to use. So, with FRESH START 2.0, we are trying to be flexible and are offering some ideas about modules being used in clusters, complementing each other or helping you see some links so you can decide which approach might best serve your needs.

We have clustered some modules by using the same initial word in their title. These modules tend to address similar theories or issues but look at them differently.

In addition, we believe some modules cluster together around a common theme. Thus, we have indicated these clusters below. Remember, if you don't like the ideas, don't use them. Your instincts and ideas are just as good!

NOTE: Some modules appear in more than one cluster.

Format

In addition to the hard copy, the modules of this curriculum are offered to you on a CD in PowerPoint format. This material is presented on disc so that you may change it as you find it appropriate or desirable.

For each session, you will be given:

- a) the introduction to the module (statement of purpose, biblical/theological understanding and desired results), which you may rephrase in your own words as a way of introducing the session; and

b) the teaching module, which consists of “slides” and “notes.” The “slides” are the information which should be made available to participants through the use of newsprint, handouts, overhead transparencies or computer projection. Accompanying each “slide” of information are the “notes” for the facilitators about the teaching that accompanies that piece of information, such as suggested points to be made; questions to be asked; stories to be told; and connections to be noted. In the modules which we have indicated for use with both lay and ordained leaders, we have included suggestions for using the material and leading the discussion for each specific group.

CLUSTERS

The following modules might be used in a cluster or single presentation session that includes a variety of different ways of looking at **common themes**.

A. Getting to Know You Cluster (Consists of the modules: Exit and Entrance; Getting to Know You (2), History Taking; and The Bishop)

This cluster consists of three modules related around the common theme: “I want to know more about you and want you to know more about me.” They might be used in one longer session or in a sequence of sessions. They might be used at an initial gathering of lay and clergy leaders.

B. Role Cluster (Consists of the modules: Role: Clarifying Roles; Role: Habits, Norms & Expectations; and Role: Understanding the “Pinch” and Renegotiating Roles)

This cluster focuses on the issue of “role” to help participants look at the difference between “what we do” and “who we are” in our roles as lay and ordained leaders and provides tools for discussion around these issues.

C. Congregational Development and Conflict Cluster (Consists of the modules: Conflict Awareness; Conflict and Church Size; Congregational Development 101; Decision Making; Systems Theory; Understanding Church Type; Understanding Transition and Managing Change; and Vestry Retreats)

This cluster looks at some of the theories about church life and ways the theories can be helpful in understanding what is happening in your congregation.

D. Leadership and Authority Cluster (Consists of the modules: Decision Making; Models of Leadership and Authority; Power, Influence, Authority and Control in the Congregation; and Reinventing Leadership)

This cluster looks at the theme of leadership and ways it is used in the congregational setting.

E. Managing Transition Cluster (Consists of the modules: Goal Setting; Mutual Ministry Cycle; Profile Versus Reality; Role: Clarifying Roles; Role: Clarifying and Meeting Expectations; Role: Understanding the “Pinch” Renegotiating Roles; and Understanding Transition and Managing Change)

This cluster focuses on what can happen when expectations and reality do not match and some

ways to anticipate this happening (because it will). It also provides ideas for implementing change and managing unexpected change.

F. Spiritual Care and Self Balance Cluster
(Consists of the modules: Importance of Family and Friends; Spiritual Care and Support of Leaders in Ministry; Spiritual Formation in Transition; Strategies for Achieving Personal Balance; Strategies for Organizing Your Professional Life; and Understanding Stress and Burnout)

This cluster addresses the need for leaders to take care of themselves spiritually, physically, emotionally and professionally, especially during the stressful times of transition.

Do NOT treat this design with kid gloves

Don't be a slave to the design of any module or the lumping of modules. We have never done any of these modules the same way twice ... honest!!! If any part of the design is completely sacrosanct, we'll tell you. Use the design as a starting place. Make it your own; do it in your own style. Add your own stories from your own experience. Refer to stories and people and congregations in your own diocese whom the participants know or have heard about. Look for ways in which the theories presented here have been proven in the life of your own diocese. And for God's sake, have fun!

One final note from the authors

Let us know how FRESH START works for you:

- What modules were really helpful or worked really well for you?
- What changes did you make? What exercises did you try? How did it go?
- What was missing that you needed? What was misleading? What "bombed?"

FRESH START is a work in progress. This 2.0 version has three completely new modules and thirteen modified modules. We hope to continue to add new modules over time. They will be shared with the FRESH START community as they are developed. If you've designed and developed additional modules which your participants have found helpful, interesting and important, send them to us (in a format similar to ours), and our planning team will consider them for publication and distribution to dioceses using FRESH START (crediting you, of course).

Feedback on the curriculum and/or new module designs may be sent to:

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Section VIII.

Evaluation and Research

Ongoing evaluation and research is always an integral component of the FRESH START program. Through evaluation and research, we will learn:

- (1) how transitions in clergy leadership progress;
- (2) how transitions affect clergy, lay people and the relationships between them;
- (3) how the FRESH START program and its various components affect the transition process; and
- (4) how FRESH START supports the ministry of a diocese, its congregations and leaders, lay and ordained.

We will from time to time ask for feedback from facilitators, clergy and lay participants, bishops and vestries. As always, comments and suggestions are encouraged.

