



THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN  
COLORADO



## Small and Rural Church Task Force Report

January 2023

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## Introduction

Knowing how best to support and encourage the smallest, most remote congregations in Colorado has been a challenge throughout the history of our diocese. Today, about 25 percent of all the congregations that make up the Episcopal Church in Colorado are both small in number (around 25 attendees on Sunday or fewer) and rural (outside of urban/metro areas and a distance from the nearest Episcopal church). That's one out of every four churches (see [Appendix A](#)).

In Colorado, we live in communities and worship in churches over a wide and geographically diverse area. Our towns and cities are politically mixed and vary economically and socially, as well. There is no “one right way” to be followers of Jesus in every setting. Yet these small and rural congregations have managed to endure and even prosper in their faithfulness to the Gospel. There is much to celebrate – and much work to be done.

Bishop Kym Lucas called for the creation of a Small and Rural Church Task Force early in 2022 to survey the needs and concerns of these congregations and to set about finding ways to help them; as she stated, not to just “survive” but “thrive.” (See the Bishop’s Charge in [Appendix B](#)). The members of the Task Force represented mostly small and rural churches across the diocese. Over the last ten months, we met as a group over Zoom and worked in subgroups to carry out our tasks. The present report is a summary of our findings and recommendations.

This report does not attempt to resolve or even identify every issue facing small and rural Episcopal churches in Colorado. Issues concerning liturgy, stewardship, or evangelism, for example, affect churches of all sizes. Early on, the Task Force selected three areas of focus from the Bishop’s charge to us that garnered particular attention as being unique to small and rural congregations. The three sections of this report (*Lay Pastoral Leaders*, *Clergy Utilization*, and *Thriving Congregations*) explore these areas. Our results are drawn from grassroots interviews and observations and tend to be more appreciative of the efforts of these congregations rather than finding fault, blame or criticism.

A word about the recommendations included here: these are intended to provide guidance and/or to stimulate ideas about what could be accomplished to assist and encourage these churches. These recommendations are not cast in stone. We invite additional suggestions and welcome corrections to facts or impressions shared here. Furthermore, our work was a “point-in-time” study, and some actions have already been taken to address issues or concerns raised.

We hope to host several online or in-person Q & A sessions following publication of this report. Thinking more broadly and outside the conventions of familiar church life could help these congregations continue to carry out their ministry. And, as our denomination shrinks and ages, we may have much to learn from the small church about what is most important and what is likely to endure.

## Members of the Small and Rural Church Task Force

- The Rev. Michael Fay, retired
- Nancy Kinney, Northwest Region Missioner; St. John the Baptist, Breckenridge – Co-Chair
- Lisa Morton, Bishop’s Warden; St. George’s, Leadville
- The Rev. Kaye Piper, Diaconal Council; Deacon, St. John the Baptist, Granby
- Katherine Richardson, Bishop’s Warden; St. John’s, New Castle
- Doug Saxton; All Saints, Battlement Mesa – Co-Chair
- Michelle Stone, Southwest Region Administrator; St. Stephen, Monte Vista
- The Rev. Canon Lucy Amerman, Interim Canon for Mission and Administration



*View from All Saints, Battlement Mesa*

## Part I – The Role of Lay Pastoral Leaders

To explore the role of Lay Pastoral and other lay leaders, we developed a list of questions to be used during an interview (see [Appendix C](#)). Our intent was to focus primarily on the first two questions listed to develop recommendations for the diocese. Little did we know that folks were eager to be heard and to express their gratification that the LPL program was getting some attention and affirmation from the diocese and that the program is considered vital to the survival of small churches.

### LPL Subgroup

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Katherine Richardson, *St. John's, New Castle*

Missy Stone, *St. Stephen's, Monte Vista*

The current Lay Pastoral Leaders list (May 2022) included 15 Lay Pastoral Leaders (LPLs) serving just 8 of the 27 churches identified as small and rural. (See [Appendix D](#) for a list.) Interviews with all except one were conducted. Because we were interested in the LPL program as a whole, we included all LPLs in our interviews, regardless of whether they served churches both small and rural. All have been in the program for well over four years, the specified time in which the LPL must relicense, and some as long ago as 2008, well over a decade. All are interested in relicensing, apart from Frank Walters (St. Augustine's, *Creede*) who at the time of his interview in April 2022 was sensing “God was through with him.” Frank offered a beautiful testimony to his relationship with God’s guidance toward his sermon preparation for the last 15 years (Frank’s comments are included in [Appendix E](#)).

Like Frank, who was candid about where he was in his commitment to church leadership, we were privileged to glimpse a myriad of personalities that have pledged their time to serve God through the LPL program. They have shared with us how their churches are recovering from the pandemic, how they prepare their homilies, and how they manage careers and family while performing the duties of the LPL.

Many of the LPLs have other duties in their small churches, such as Altar Guild, Acolyte, Eucharistic Visitors, and Readers. Some have been Bishop’s Warden. Only two have had to perform both Bishop’s Warden and LPL positions at the same time out of need. There are Licensed Lay Readers, such as Frank, but also volunteers who are willing to read the lessons. Administrative tasks are doled out to those willing to step up and use their talent in the positions of junior warden, treasurer, clerk, bulletins, and cleaning. Rarely, almost never, in a small church is someone chomping at the bit or waiting for a position they desire to open.



*Bishop's Visit to Prince of Peace, Sterling*

Congregational life in a small and rural church is kindred to being a family. Everyone does their part, some more than others. Beside Prayers of the People, coffee hour is where we find out what's going on. For example, folks at St. John's, New Castle are highly interested in the Task Force study and are happy to know that from the interviews we conducted, the other rural churches want to remain open as well. The formation of partnership churches, use of the Lay Pastoral Leaders, and moving forward in dealing with Covid are tools to do so.

***Please note*** that problems with the requirements for relicensing have been rectified by Interim Canon for Mission & Administration, the Rev. Canon Lucy Amerman, but the topic is still included in the summary as it was a main concern at the time of the interviews and will continue to be a valid concern in the future.

## 1. What kind of support would you like to see from the Diocese regarding the Lay Pastoral Leader program?

One-half of the LPLs interviewed were concerned about renewing their LPL license. Negative feelings cropped up when their emails went unanswered regarding doing so. This caused insecurities that the Diocese may be doing away with the program. Pam Strohmeyer (*St. Barnabas, Glenwood Springs*) would like to see more clarification for renewing LPL licenses. Probably the eldest LPL, Eleanor Foley (who is 86, *St. Peter's, Pueblo*) pointed out that the LPL program needs new LPLs. "The stagnant atmosphere and non-communication from the Diocese on the matter is worrisome."

Susan Cotterman, (also *St. Peter's, Pueblo*) supports Eleanor's idea that new LPLs are needed. Susan believes in the LPL program and wonders how the small churches would have a chance of staying open if they didn't have the LPL program.

Diane Parker (*St. Stephen the Martyr, Monte Vista*) had a very different experience with the Diocese. Diane states, "I believe the Diocese is working diligently to support LPLs through Zoom chats with Canon Alex, through quick responses to email questions, and this year, through the resurgence of an LPL retreat."

This could reflect the need for the Diocese to engage in a relationship with the LPLs more than there being a communications issue.

On another positive note, many of the LPLs indicated in one way or another the sentiment of Mary Anderson (*Prince of Peace, Sterling*): "It would be refreshing and spiritually renewing to have some access to continued learning. For example, in the last year or so, the Diocese offered a training in writing sermons."

While in-person classes would be welcomed, several others expressed the need for availability to online learning for those who found it hard to get away because of work or family commitments. Guidance for sermon writing is highly sought after, but also help is needed in dealing with grief and dying.

Another LPL, Nancy Abbot (*Trinity, Kremmling*), offered that the retreats were meaningful and one of the best experiences of her life. She was surrounded by like-minded individuals wanting to serve God and their churches by becoming a Lay Pastoral Leader. Regularly scheduled LPL retreats at Cathedral Ridge are what Betsy Leonard (*All Saints, Battlement Mesa*) would consider as welcoming support from the Diocese, especially inclusive of "Sermon Training" and "Pastoral Care." Pam Strohmeyer (*St. Barnabas, Glenwood Springs*) and Tamaira Terry (*St. John, New Castle*) would like to meet with other LPLs regionally, thinking the smaller group might be easier to get together and more intimate for sharing.

*"Lay responsibility goes with smallness. Where there is no possibility of a clerical bureaucracy, jobs get done by the people who can and will do them."*

*The Celebration of Smallness  
by Samuel J. Wylie*





*The Rev. Matthew Frey & Rich Rosene, LPL – Trinity, Kremmling*

In summary, the LPLs would like to see support from the Diocese in the way of:  
Building relationships with the LPLs & promote communication from the Diocese

- Clarification of Relicensing
- Recruitment/Training for new LPLs
- Writing Sermons/ Sermon Preparation
- Preaching/ Delivering the Homily
- Guidance on dealing with grief and dying
- Suggested Readings
- Regular retreats at Cathedral Ridge
- Regional LPL gatherings in addition to Cathedral Ridge
- Safe Church Training to remain online

**Note:** While some of these topics were not brought up in the above narrative, please refer to the [Appendix E](#) for content from the actual interviews. A tally was made from that information.

## **2. Are the bi-monthly meetings with the Canon for Mission and Administration enough?**

Finding the correct day and time for the bi-monthly LPL meeting seems to be difficult for all involved. The LPLs are sympathetic to the complications of setting a day and time, but the weekday meetings are challenging for the LPLs that are

holding full-time jobs. Carla Howard (*St. Peter's, Pueblo*) shared, "Originally, the meetings for the LPLs were held on a Saturday. When Canon Alex changed them to a weekday, I could no longer attend."

Tamaira Terry (*St. John, New Castle*) echoes Carla's dilemma but adds that she would like to see support from the Diocese in adding another online meeting time to accommodate the working LPLs.

Besides those who work full-time, there are also problems attending the bi-monthly meetings for those who are caring for family members, such as Susan Cotterman (*St. Peter's, Pueblo*), who takes care of her three-year-old grandson during the week.

Rich Rosene (*Trinity, Kremmling*) also likes to travel with his wife when she is available so sometimes misses the bi-monthly meetings. However, he honestly admits he has missed meetings because he does not check his email often enough. A meeting reminder sent to the LPLs along with the Zoom invite would be helpful to him and possibly others.

Mary Anderson (*Prince of Peace, Sterling*) may have the solution. Mary, who is retired, sympathizes with her fellow LPLs. She suggested, "post the highlights of the LPL meetings online or via email, so the LPLs that can't attend the meetings are in the loop with the discussion."

For some, Zoom meetings are still a challenge. To these folks, in-person retreats are highly needed to stay connected. And for at least three LPLs, the meetings don't seem to offer a lot of content or good discussion. Eleanor Foley (*St. Peter, Pueblo*) wondered why they couldn't have one meeting with the Vicars and LPLs all together, instead of the three time slots. She feels being together as a group would build more trust and understanding.



*All Saints, Battlement Mesa – Blessing of the Animals*

In summary, the LPLs would like to see the following for the bi-monthly meetings.

- Have two meeting times.
- Post highlights from the meetings either online or via email.
- Consider sending a reminder email with Zoom invite the day before the meeting.
- Consider not having Vicars and LPLs split up, just one meeting, including both parties.

The Lay Pastoral Leaders program that consists only of volunteers has proven vital to these small churches. The LPLs have a spiritual commitment to share God's word and deliver his message. Frank Walter's meditative approach to sermon writing seems peaceful in waiting for God's guidance. Tamaira Terry (*St. John, New Castle*) loves bringing people to God, so her discernment process was straightforward. Betsy Leonard's (*All Saints', Battlement Mesa*) reluctance to become an LPL was driven by self-doubt. Her priest at the time, E.J. Rivet, saw her love of Christ and encouraged her. She stated, "...now, if the church could afford a full-time priest, I would be sad not to be a Lay Pastoral Leader."

Last, Carla Howard (*St. Peter's, Pueblo*) has a strong belief and embraces the following scripture as the essence of the Lay Pastoral Leader program:

*Again, I say unto you, That, if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them. Matthew 18:19-20 KJV*

**In conclusion**, the Lay Pastoral Leaders program has not only facilitated the administration of the Reserved Sacrament to their congregations, made the use of one priest for multiple churches feasible, possibly kept the doors of the church open, but generated another group of faithful servants. Their love for God, family, and community worship makes them dedicated to the role they have as a Lay Pastoral Leader.

## Recommendations

**LPL-1. We recommend:** Creating a "Small Church Corner" on the diocesan website. Include a list of resources from the Commission on Ministry:

- Lay Pastoral Leader: Licensing, Training, and Practice of Lay Pastoral Leaders Within a Partnership for Mission.
- Study Bibliography
- Training Modules
- Eucharistic Lay Ministry Training site/contact
- The Safe Church Training site/contact

**LPL-2. We recommend:** On the “Small Church Corner” web page, include a list of resources for the Lay Pastoral Leaders Program:

- Post the LPL bi-monthly meeting dates/times
- Post highlights from the LPL bi-monthly meetings
- Promote the Recruitment/Training for new LPLs
- Post links, webinars, or workshops for Writing Sermons/ Sermon Preparation
- Post links, webinars, or workshops for Preaching/ Delivering the Homily
- Post links, webinars, or workshops for handling Grief and Dying
- Post “Suggested Readings”
- Post LPL retreat dates/times at Cathedral Ridge
- Post a list of churches with LPLs: Including region, town, address, service times, contact information, current websites.
- Post a roster of LPLs/partnership churches



*St. Elizabeth, Brighton*

## Part II – Clergy Utilization in Small and Rural Churches

Folks in the diocese at large may be unaware of the varied ways in which ordained clergy are utilized in small and rural congregations. Churches in rural, often remote areas have demonstrated particular resilience and innovation in the ways they have worked with priests, in particular, to serve their communities. Where clergy are not regularly available, congregations have employed other means of sustaining their common life together, most notably with lay readers and lay pastoral leaders (LPLs). The utilization of LPLs, in particular, has been examined in the previous section of this report.



*St. James, Meeker - Blessing of the Animals*

This portion of our report focuses on the utilization and deployment of ordained clergy (priests and deacons) across our diocese where a congregation is located in a rural community and reports membership of about 25 or fewer members. Some of these congregations once employed full- or part-time clergy, but with aging congregants on limited incomes and/or a declining number of overall members, the employment of a full-time rector or vicar has become untenable. To be sure, the number of full-time clergy positions is also declining in the Episcopal Church overall (Price, 2002; Episcopal Church Foundation, 2022). Part-time clergy, many of whom may require employment outside the church to support themselves and/or their families, may have fewer opportunities in small, rural communities. This could be changing, however, with the increased availability of remote employment in certain fields.

**How are ordained clergy presently be utilized in small and rural congregations? And how could ordained clergy be more consistently and creatively deployed in these congregations?** These two questions guided our investigation. To provide answers to these questions, we drew from personal interviews with clergy and from discussions with small church leaders at the 2022 Abound Retreat for congregations with ASA<80. This portion of the Small and Rural Church Task Force report is divided into three sections: 1) Models of clergy utilization presently in use; 2) Impact of clergy retirement, respite, and resignation; 3) Availability and encouragement of supply clergy; 4) Increased utilization of deacons; 5) Ecumenical and Interfaith potential.

### Clergy Utilization Subgroup

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- Dr. Nancy Kinney, *Missioner, Northwest Region; St. John the Baptist, Breckenridge*
- The Rev. Kaye Piper, *Deacon, St. John the Baptist, Granby*

### Models of Clergy Utilization at Present

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Although the categories listed in the following table may be self-explanatory, an additional point should be made. The category of “circuit rider” clergy is historical: a number of congregations on the Western slope were served for many years by clergy who made the rounds on Sunday. No clergy serve in this particular capacity today. However, the “circuit rider” approach is frequently mentioned in association with Colorado’s small, rural churches. (See table of models, following.)

Providing support to clergy in small and rural congregations should take many forms, given the varieties of service they provide. Guidance for wardens and other congregational leaders should be made available as to how they might interact with clergy and obtain diocesan resources. Full-time clergy are an important link to diocesan support. With only part-time or supply clergy support, strong connections to diocesan and regional resources become even more important.



*St. Paul, Central City*

Model	Where Utilized
Resident, full-time clergy (rector or vicar)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• St. Mark's Church of Grace, Craig</li> <li>• St. James, Meeker</li> </ul>
Resident, part-time clergy (rector or vicar), possibly bi-vocational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• St. James, Lake City</li> <li>• St. John, Ouray</li> </ul>
Partnership vicar overseeing 2+ congregations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Episcopal Church in Garfield County (St. Barnabas, Glenwood Springs; All Saints, Battlement Mesa; St. John, New Castle)</li> <li>• Grand County Partnership (St. John the Baptist, Granby; Trinity, Kremmling)</li> <li>• Good Samaritan, Gunnison/All Saints in the Mountains, Crested Butte (Seasonal)</li> <li>• Salida/Little Shepherd of the Hills, Crestone</li> <li>• Upper Rio Grande Partnership (St. Stephen, Monte Vista &amp; St. Augustine, Creede)</li> </ul>
Part-time commuting clergy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• St. George, Leadville</li> <li>• Grace, Buena Vista</li> </ul>
Supply clergy on a rotating basis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• St. Luke, Westcliffe</li> <li>• St. Andrew, Cripple Creek</li> </ul>
Supply clergy, intermittent or when available	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grace, Georgetown</li> <li>• St. Paul, Central City</li> </ul>
No clergy routinely available	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• St. Andrew, La Junta</li> <li>• Prince of Peace, Sterling</li> <li>• St. Paul, Lamar</li> <li>• St. Elizabeth, Brighton</li> <li>• St. David of the Hills, Woodland Park</li> <li>• St. Michael, Telluride</li> </ul>
"Circuit Rider" clergy visiting 1+ church each Sunday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>None</i></li> </ul>

## Recommendations

**CU-1. We recommend:** To familiarize small and rural churches (and the diocese at-large) with these various models of clergy utilization through diocesan communication.

**CU-2. We recommend:** Link small and rural congregations with a larger congregation elsewhere in the state to increase awareness of challenges and promote a sense of inclusion.

**CU-3. We recommend:** That the bishop establish a regular routine of extended time on the western slope, in particular, to demonstrate support for the unique challenges facing the majority of our small and rural congregations. This would include allowing appointments with clergy and/or lay leaders and convening meetings on pressing concerns. These extended periods could be in conjunction with visitations.

**CU-4. We recommend:** Require all Canons and Missioners to report annually at Diocesan Convention with which congregations they have had direct one-on-one (diocesan staff to congregation/vestry/leadership) contact, either by in-person visits or online meetings. This could be limited to small congregations but diocesan-wide comparisons could be instructive.

## Support and Guidance for Partnership Vicars

An overview of the Lay Pastoral Leader (LPL) program, along with recommendations for its continued success, is outlined in a separate/previous section. However, the preparation and ongoing support for the specific responsibilities of Partnership Vicars is touched upon here. In our present diocesan system, LPLs are only deployed with the supervision of an ordained priest.

In addition to providing liturgical services and support (e.g., Reserved Sacrament), the Partnership Vicar is expected to provide certain supervisory functions including some ongoing training and mentorship of each partnership's LPLs.

However, in the instance of clergy retirement or resignation, an LPL may be left without the benefit of ordained clergy leadership.

## Recommendations

**CU-5. We recommend:** Clearly identifying the individual who would take responsibility for ongoing mentorship of and support for clergy who lead partnerships. Suggested: Canon for Mission and Administration; Regional missionary; retired or active clergy with significant small church experience.

**CU-6. We recommend:** Immediately identifying clergy support for any active Lay Pastoral Leader when a clergy vacancy occurs. Suggested: Regional missionary; retired or active clergy with significant small church experience.



## Impact of Clergy Retirement, Respite, and Resignation

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Full- or part-time clergy deployment may provide stability for a period of time. Eventually, however, clergy are required to retire (mandatory at age 72 years, although this may be extended) or may decide it's time to move on to another position. Identifying new clergy to assume these varied roles is a considerable challenge, especially in remote locations. A looming change in leadership may raise anxiety in congregations about decline and possible closure.

Planning for succession in leadership can be a useful process to empower congregations to see their way forward. Succession planning<sup>1</sup> may be especially helpful when a congregation anticipates a change in leadership model, for example, from a full-time rector to a part-time vicar and/or partnership arrangement. Obviously, assistance should be provided before a situation reaches a crisis. The laity deserves this consideration, and preparing them for a major change of “handing off the baton” might alleviate unnecessary turmoil or loss of members. Such assistance should be provided regardless of the reason for a clergy vacancy (retirement or resignation) but may be more important when a partnership vicar steps away.

In addition, the opportunity for respite through time away for vacation, retreat, or sabbatical is seriously limited for clergy in small and rural congregations. Not only are supply clergy hard to find in rural areas, but the cost of mileage and potential hotel accommodations for a supply priest can be prohibitive. Some clergy in small and rural congregations have said they “just don't bother.” Burnout is a very likely result for these clergy. In addition, two-plus years of Covid required clergy to attend to the pastoral needs of their congregations in new and unpredictable ways. Allowing clergy serving small churches in rural areas to experience a degree of respite may be a pressing need in 2022-2023.

### Recommendations

**CU-7. We recommend:** Identifying, recruiting, and training individuals with particular expertise in succession planning who can work with congregations well before a retirement or resignation occurs.

## Availability and Encouragement of Supply Clergy

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Few congregations are able to secure supply clergy for every Sunday. Those without a resident priest typically hold lay-led services with an occasional visit from supply clergy. At least part of the reason is cost; the other is availability.

In 2022, much effort has gone into identifying and encouraging clergy around the diocese to serve as supply to our mountain and remote congregations. According to our Canon for Clergy Transition and Wellness, about three (3) clergy have expressed a willingness to travel long distances to supply congregations in rural areas. Two (2) of these clergy are canonically resident in the diocese and one (1) other is licensed to

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<sup>1</sup> “Succession planning” is a term used widely in the nonprofit sector. As an executive leader is planning to leave an organization, the board and senior officers work together to arrange a smooth transition. See <https://www.councilofnonprofits.org/tools-resources/succession-planning-nonprofits-managing-leadership-transitions>

officiate. An additional group of mostly retired clergy are already committed to serving congregations in rural areas on a somewhat regular basis.

Retired clergy are the most likely source of supply clergy. However, as the map in [Appendix F](#) shows, most supply clergy in the diocese (either resident or licensed) live in metropolitan areas on the Front Range and far from congregations in the outlying corners of the state, in particular.

Bi-vocational clergy may also be an additional source of supply clergy or have a willingness to serve a small and rural congregation on a part-time basis. Attracting and welcoming bi-vocational priests could offer a solution for clergy support in at least a small number of congregations.



*St. John the Baptist, Granby – Worship at the River*

## Recommendations

**CU-8. We recommend:** As the bishop considers extending a License to Officiate to clergy from other dioceses, include an expectation that, if granted, these clergy will be willing to serve a small or rural church at least once or twice a year.

**CU-9. We recommend:** Requesting Regional Executive Committees to set aside a modest amount in their budgets for assistance with supply clergy travel and/or hotel in occasional or unexpected circumstances.

**CU-10. We recommend:** Undertake concerted efforts to attract bi-vocational clergy to our beautiful state. Hosting a national conference in Colorado for bi-vocational clergy could further this aim.

**CU-11. We recommend:** Consider hiring as missionary a clergy leader without full-time congregational obligations to serve in either the Northwest or the Southwest regions (or both), in particular. These individuals could circulate to preach on the importance of mission, step in as supply clergy when needed, provide support to partnership vicars and offer other instruction and assistance.

### Increased Utilization of Deacons

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The Episcopal Church in Colorado currently has 23 active vocational deacons. Approximately 7 of these deacons live and serve in rural areas, primarily in the Northwest and Southwest deaneries. Increased utilization of these deacons (and raising up additional deacons) to serve in small and rural churches could provide unique support to these congregations, specifically in the areas of promoting social justice and expanding service to the community. Also, with clarification of their role in the offering of Reserve Sacrament Communion, deacons could provide occasional liturgical support to congregations when a priest is in need of respite or one is simply not available.

Several issues relate to the deployment of deacons in support of small and rural congregations. One issue is the rather awkward and theologically inconsistent situation where a lay pastoral leader may officiate at a service of Reserved Sacrament Communion, but a deacon who is ordained to preach and serve may not do so without the express permission of the bishop. In specific and limited circumstances, allowing a deacon to conduct such a service may be a real help to small and rural congregations. A visiting deacon given the go-ahead to offer Reserved Sacrament Communion may also provide relief in congregations where an LPL needs a break from service, and the partnership vicar is otherwise obligated.

To be sure, deacons serve under the direct authority of the bishop and are deployed as the bishop sees best. However, it seems unworkable that a deacon in a small, rural community might be deployed to a distant congregation other than the one where they were raised up. This notion has purportedly led some interested individuals not to pursue the diaconate. The extent and style of training has also discouraged some who may feel a call to this servant ministry.

Recently, a group of deacons on the western slope have pursued spreading the word about the diaconate to some of our rural congregations. This could be a productive development in expanding ordained ministry across the diocese. In addition to increasing knowledge about the order of deacons, the unique prophetic role of deacons in “bringing the church to the world and the world to the church” could facilitate more thriving congregations as a later segment of this report suggests.

### Recommendations

**CU-12. We recommend:** The bishop articulate a policy clarifying the occasional use of deacons in the celebration of Reserved Sacrament Communion. A draft of a sample policy for her consideration is found in [Appendix C](#).

**CU-13. We recommend:** Discontinuing the practice of requiring deacons in training to serve in congregations other than the small and rural ones in which

they are raised up or making accommodations for those in remote and distant situations.



*The Rev. Bain & Christine White, St. Mark's Church of Grace, Craig*

### **Ecumenical and Interfaith Potential**

Many (possibly most) churches in outlying and/or rural parts of the state make an effort to work collaboratively with other denominations and faiths. St. Mark's Church of Grace in Craig, for example, is a combined Episcopal-Lutheran congregation. The blending of resources from members of these two traditions enables one clergy leader to be employed and a place of worship to be maintained. The Episcopal Church in Garfield County is fortunate to have an ordained Lutheran pastor serving its three congregations. In Buena Vista, a unique ecumenical fellowship between the Episcopal and Methodist churches helps sustain a congregation and its presence in the community.

Some congregations utilize their connections to varied faith groups to provide other pastoral services, such as hospital visitation and pastoral care for members. St. Luke, Westcliffe, for instance, relies on a retired Presbyterian pastor in the community to provide pastoral care in-between visits from supply Episcopal clergy. Clearly, where the presence of an Episcopal clergy leader is not routinely possible, congregations can forge relationships with other faith leaders in a productive way.

## Recommendations

**CU-14. We recommend:** Urge clergy and congregational leaders of small and rural churches to actively explore potential partnerships with other faith traditions for their mutual benefit.

**CU-15. We recommend:** Engage other judicatory-level personnel in planning and strategizing for increased ecumenical efforts in small and rural communities.



*Prince of Peace, Sterling*

## Part III – Thriving Small and Rural Churches

In announcing the formation of the Task Force, we were struck by Bishop Kym Lucas's expressing a desire to see them thrive for years to come rather than just survive. Her letter led us to look for definitions of thriving that could guide us. We found several good ones, but the best one was "feeling good about oneself" and, by extension, your situation. Feeling good about things is something we should all want for each other's churches.

Our first response to the task was to 1) identify churches that are thriving under current (roughly August-October, 2022) conditions in our diocese and 2) describe what thriving looks like.

Three members of the Task Force identified with "thriving" as a distinct and compelling topic. The three individuals listed below undertook a months-long examination of what "thriving" looks like in small and rural churches in the Diocese of Colorado.



*Restaurant sign near the western Colorado border*

### Thriving Small and Rural Churches Subgroup

- Doug Saxton, *Lay Pastoral Leader; All Saints - Battlement Mesa and Co-Chair of the Task Force on Small and Rural Churches*
- Lisa Morton, *Bishop's Warden; St. George's, Leadville*
- The Rev. Dr. Michael Fay, *Retired*

### Starting Points

We began with a list of characteristics drawn from several foundational documents based on work related to small and rural churches. In particular, we utilized *The Celebration of Smallness* by Samuel Wiley and *Local Ministry; Story, Process and Meaning: Creating a hospitable environment for mutual ministry* by Tom Ray and Jim Kelsey. (See [Appendix H](#) for a list of recommended book titles.) The primary characteristics we identified were as follows:

- a leadership group not dependent upon a priest
- an outward, as opposed to an inward, focus by the church

- recognition in the community of the church as a part of its spiritual fabric
- collaboration with community organizations and/or other churches

All these features were considered likely to make such churches feel good about themselves. Opposing feelings might include being disheartened, embarrassed by, or even ashamed about things such as low Sunday attendance, a small annual budget, or inability to afford full-time clergy.

As we began our interviews and research, we added other characteristics which seemed common to thriving small churches. This subset of features included:

- identifying community needs and addressing them
- a high rate of congregational participation in outreach activity
- the re-purposing of church facilities and property in support of outreach
- significant charitable giving to causes dear to the community

Also at mid-course, we attached another factor to “thriving” churches. This additional feature was strong lay leadership, particularly in leading worship services other than celebration of the Holy Eucharist. We found that participation in other worship formats (Morning and Evening Prayer, for example) encourages lay leadership development and also supports outreach activity.

## Our Approach

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An estimated total of twenty-seven (27) congregations in the diocese are small (ASA of about 25) and rural. We contacted all five (5) Regional Missioners in the Diocese and asked if they would identify small rural churches in their regions that they thought were thriving according to the characteristics we initially chose. In all, twelve (12) churches were suggested. Then, our three task force members (working as a sub-committee) agreed to follow up with interviews of four congregations each. We had also asked the Missioners to identify a person at each church who might have the broadest perspective on thriving conditions in their congregations. In the process of conducting these interviews, the subcommittee had to replace some of the thriving church candidates. Some were ultimately not selected for one or more reasons: 1) they couldn't be reached, 2) they had comparatively large congregations, or 3) they were not considered rural. Two churches were found during the interviews to be clearly small but not so rural. An additional church was neither small nor rural but, until fairly recently, had been both small and rural. However, all three were considered thriving, so they were left in our sample for the sake of their interest factors.

Ultimately, we interviewed individuals at eleven (11) small churches. Of those, ten (10) were rural, and nine (9) of those were thriving according to our defining characteristics. Our sample of thriving churches represented one-third of all small and rural churches.

## General Findings

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### Church Attendance

The individuals we interviewed at the ten (10) small and thriving churches in our sample all supported the idea that thriving is a term safely applied to small churches without regard to average Sunday attendance or annual budget. To get a sense of current attendance, we asked respondents to tell us what was typical attendance for their worship services during the time window of our interviews (August–October, 2022).

The largest congregation that met our criteria for being both small and rural had a typical attendance of about 45 people at that time, but it was a summer resort community. Of the other ten (10) small churches reviewed, seven (7) had 20 or fewer people in attendance. Of these, five had less than 10 congregants present at a typical service. The smallest church saw an average of only five (5) attendees.

### Worship Leaders: Clergy and Lay

We looked at clergy leadership and found that of the eleven (11) small churches, only two (2) of them had full-time clergy, and one (1) of those was a joint ecumenical pastorate. Two of the churches surveyed had recently lost a Vicar to retirement or resignation.

Among the thriving churches, two (2) have vicars and two (2) others have part-time priests at Sunday services. Of the other six (6), only half can depend on regular help from supply priests. Only one (1) church is served every Sunday with a regular rotation of supply clergy. Lay Pastoral Leaders served at just three (3) of the thriving churches, two (2) of which are now (as of this writing, in October 2022) without a priest.

Of the churches most lacking in access to clergy, two (2) were considered thriving despite the absence of a clergy leader. One of these thriving churches had gone for a long period without a priest at all (resident or supply) nor a Lay Pastoral Leader. Another not-so-fortunate church has had no priest and could not attract any supply clergy to its remote location and is also now without a Lay Pastoral Leader.

The absence of a priest in small rural churches is a phenomenon well-documented both among mainline churches generally and within the Episcopal Church. In the National Congregations Study of 2018-2019, 43 percent of the mainline Protestant congregations in the U.S. had no full-time paid clergy. In 2016, 70 percent of New England's United Methodist congregations had no full-time pastor nor did any of the 24 Episcopal churches in the Diocese of Northern Michigan (See *Part-Time is Plenty: Thriving without Full-Time Clergy*, Jeffrey MacDonald, Westminster John Knox Press, 2020).

A complete list of small and rural churches in the Diocese of Colorado, both with or without clergy leaders (whether full- or part-time), can be found in the Clergy Utilization Section of the Report.





*St. James, Meeker - Summer Service Outdoors*

### **Alternative Worship Formats**

The use of alternative worship formats was noted as a way to indicate lay leadership's adaptability in worship when regular clergy are not present. Of the ten (10) congregations without full-time clergy, seven (7) use alternate worship formats including Reserve Sacrament Communion, Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer, Compline, as well as prayer meetings of various sorts. One congregation offers a service of Holy Eucharist on Saturday evening rather than on Sunday (to take advantage of a supply priest's availability) and provides a community meal following. Another congregation is served by a joint pastorate with the United Methodists; a Methodist-led service takes place on alternate weeks.

### **Life in Thriving Small Rural Churches**

To provide a snapshot of the ways small churches are thriving, a summary of our findings is presented. Due to the limited availability of clergy in these churches within our sample, the laity are quite busy within our sample, filling what would be voids in leadership of worship and service. Of the churches in our sample, four (4) use LPLs exclusively to fill gaps; one church uses multiple lay leaders (not LPLs) to make up for infrequent supply priest visits. Only **St. Luke's, Westcliff** has a dependable rotation of supply priests, principally because of their leadership efforts.

Although clergy may typically have leadership roles in their communities, the laity at the small churches we spoke with were highly involved in community groups and thus giving these churches a place in the fabric of their communities. At **St. John's,**

**Ouray**, for instance, members are significantly involved in county government, schools, and hospice ministry, as well as a food bank. **Grace Church, Georgetown**, and **Grace Church, Buena Vista**, both have members in a half dozen or more community organizations.

**St. John's, New Castle** thrives despite never having had a pastor of its own during its 100-plus years of existence and has shown remarkable resilience over decades with Morning Prayer led by the laity due to infrequent supply clergy. In adapting to new circumstances, St. John's is now in a three-church partnership (The Episcopal Church in Garfield County) with a Vicar and one LPL from the congregation and no gaps in worship services. St. John's continues to thrive as a church due to the laity's continuous emphasis on outreach in community affairs. It's generous giving in support of causes resonates strongly, including the rehabilitation of an old building for a new school, significant annual charitable giving to purchase farm animals for subsistence farmers abroad, and the local food bank.

Like St. John's involvement through significant cash and food donations to their local food banks, other small churches have developed feeding ministries for outreach programs.



*St. John, New Castle - Burning Mountain Days Float, September 2022*

**Prince of Peace, Sterling**, is both small and without a resident clergy leader. However, it has linked worship squarely within its outreach program. Using a supply priest on one Saturday a month at 4:30 pm for a service of Holy Eucharist, the congregation follows the service with a meal open to the community. A supply priest is regularly available on Saturday (while seldom, if ever, on a Sunday) but holding a Saturday evening service fits well in an agricultural community. Moreover, both the meal and

worship are held in the parish hall where the unchurched feel more at home and are inclined to participate more freely in the service.

Prince of Peace has shown its ability to adapt to conditions regarding worship while looking outwards toward the needs of the community. The church facility once accommodated a much larger congregation. A significant program came about when the leadership decided to start using the ample space for the purpose of living out their mission. At about the same time, they became aware of the amount of food insecurity in their community and wondered how much help they could be with so few resources and people to work on that kind of project. Most congregants were seniors, but a not-for-profit called Under the Umbrella approached them, looking for a place in the Sterling community where they could operate a feeding ministry. The church offered its kitchen and Parish Hall.

Under the Umbrella now operates and staffs a program at the church called Meal Train. They also supervise volunteers, among them half Prince of Peace congregants. They consider the program responsible for their sense of thriving as they offer a caring presence in the community. Those congregants work side-by-side with other volunteers from four local churches, including Lutherans, Methodists, and Mormons. Three local community organizations fund the program that provides twice-weekly meals that are free and open to the public. The not-for-profit also uses extra rooms in the church to operate a food pantry and a clothing distribution activity in which members also volunteer. Another benefit is that Under the Umbrella has made generous contributions to improvements in the kitchen and to air conditioning in the space used by them.

*The rural church is a place with unique assets: they are trusted, they are generally one of the few permanent institutions, and they have a unique connection to the community through the people who gather weekly.*

Allen T. Stanton, *Reclaiming Rural*

Like Prince of Peace, **Little Shepherd, Crestone**, hosts a feeding ministry by providing a site for the serving of community meals in the Fellowship Hall by a non-profit organization, the South-Central Colorado Seniors, which also delivers meals to the homebound. Little Shepherd church is a mission of Church of the Ascension, Salida, and is able to utilize its Crestone property for a community garden in support of the meals and also address food insecurity. The garden is tended by members and non-members alike. In addition, the church provides showers and snacks to the homeless. Each member of Little Shepherd is engaged in either worship or outreach. One member told us that the focus on outreach brought her back to the church. Attendance is still modest but has grown by a factor of 3 or 4 times over 10 years. In another sign of the influence of outreach, a master gardener now has joined those tending the garden. Once described as a “free spirit,” he now prays with the others.

Still another different feeding ministry goes on at **St. Luke, Westcliff**. Perhaps because they now have a family in attendance composing its entire total of 4 children in the congregation, they've chosen to provide school lunches supported by a grant from the Sangre de Cristo Region that has helped expand the program. A similar type of outreach is also conducted by **Grace Church, Buena Vista**.



*Little Shepherd, Crestone*

Utilizing church facilities for community service is another aspect of thriving small and rural churches. Using and adapting space towards outreach and mission took place at **St George, Leadville**, which was closed by the diocese in the 1990s due to a local mine closure and a struggling local economy. As told to us, a congregant of St. George and a new resident (who had intended to transfer to the closed church when relocating to Leadville) then hit upon the idea of opening a much-needed soup kitchen as a rationale for the diocese to re-open the church. It was successful and a deacon was sent to help.

The church didn't even have a kitchen. They started in about 1995 serving soup and sandwiches from a room not much bigger than a broom closet with a hot plate in it. They overcame resistance from a health department inspector who told them they needed at least a stove. Then more criticism came from a couple of locals who said the town didn't need a soup kitchen and that the town would get a bad name by opening one. Despite such opposition, the operation went from one day a week to twice a week and with meal delivery available.

Food security hasn't disappeared in Leadville, and now 30 years later, St. George's church and food ministry go on. Several years before the pandemic, two other churches there saw a need for a food pantry, and rather than each opening one, they partnered up with St. George to avoid competing for scarce resources and to have more space at St. George. A clergy couple served for several years, giving significant support to the ministry, but they left just as the pandemic began. However, lay people stepped up and never missed a beat, even as demand increased by about 20-fold. Limited to meals-to-go by COVID, the program also added a mobile neighborhood distribution. As space requirements increased dramatically, food began to be stored in the sanctuary, the expanse of which wasn't needed for the small congregation's worship.



*Food pantry at St. George, Leadville*

Over time, many local partners were found to support the operation: local restaurants, non-profits concerned with food insecurity making grants along with foundations, the Homeless Coalition, Lake County Human Services, and donations from individuals. Even the local Historic Preservation Fund provided for facility upgrades to the kitchen. All that assistance has also allowed for paid staff to supervise thirty regular volunteers and twice as many occasional ones. There are now one and one-half staff positions, including a full-time Food Services Director and a part-time administrator.

The program has evolved to include the provision of 4 weekly community meals. The needy and homeless persons, other community members, and volunteers all eat together with distinctions deliberately blurred. Meals are financed both by the program and by free-will offerings. A sign of the community's appreciation is that the Mayor of Leadville regularly attends.

Although only six to eight people regularly attend services without a priest or LPL, St. George has just hired a  $\frac{3}{4}$  time priest. Because meals are served four (4) days a week, the food bank is open two (2) days (irrespective of holidays), and due to worship, the church is now open every day of the week. St. George now provides 10,000 meals per year, and thus many people serve and are served there.

In our contact with **St. Alban, Windsor**, we learned that due to population growth in and around Denver since 2000, Windsor has grown from a smallish town of 14,000 to a city of nearly 36,000. On an average Sunday, it now has about 95 people in attendance. Years ago, St. Alban's inspired St. George's, Leadville, with its food ministry when it first reopened in the mid-1990s, and it continues a thriving community meal and food pantry program. There are two recent additions to the program. One is an outdoor food pantry built for the church by the local Boy Scout troop and left open for needy people to help themselves. Many contribute, but no one staffs it. Need is self-assessed, as elsewhere, but no one is embarrassed by the process. Hungry schoolchildren come by for snacks after school and end up taking food home to their family's tables. Another relatively new thing in Windsor is a community garden, as we saw at tiny Little Shepherd. There is a great deal of ecumenical collaboration by St. Alban's in the Windsor community as well.

**Grace Church, Buena Vista** is a resort town with many retired residents. Its new school backpack feeding ministry complements other long-time efforts to keep worship in the community and continue outreach ministries.

The church has a dual pastorate with an Episcopal priest and a Methodist minister. Worship is led in turn by both and is also attended by persons affiliated with the United Church of Christ. Both the Methodist minister and the Episcopal priest commute to Buena Vista. When present for the weekend, they stay in a motor home owned by the church. Episcopalians and Methodists are both on the church's governing body and the same people are in the congregation every Sunday, regardless of who leads worship. On 5<sup>th</sup> Sundays at Grace, a non-denominational group also has a service attended by all. Those folks bring children, to the delight of the seniors. Both regular and occasional supply clergy are available when the pastors are away.

The church commits 10 percent of its annual budget to outreach. Although its efforts aren't centered exclusively on food, Grace sent a meal each month during the pandemic to St. George's feeding program and supported their pantry program and free store. In addition, this congregation of mostly seniors engages in outreach through its special talents in sewing.

A sewing group, Loose Threads, completes at least 15 quilts a year. Since 2005, three hundred and forty-three (345) quilts have been sent to VA hospitals for veterans and active-duty personnel. The group has also made pillowcase dresses for little girls in developing countries, lap quilts for handicapped persons, and bed quilts for a

domestic violence victims along with suitcases for children removed from their homes. Craft shows of the group's work occur twice a year, and proceeds go toward outreach grants for non-profits. The church is also at the center of the community with a patriotic concert it puts on every Fourth of July.

**St. Andrew's, Manitou Springs**, like Buena Vista, has clergy leadership but was the only small church we surveyed to have a full-time priest. Technically, the church is not located in a rural area; however, the factors related to thriving were evident, so it was kept in our sample. They, too, have a feeding ministry and a monthly meal hosted for seniors that, during COVID, drew 100 guests on a regular basis. Although down to about 20 members, St. Andrew's collaborates on outreach with seven (7) other small churches and is working on a relationship with the much larger parish of St. Michael, Colorado Springs. The congregation shelters the homeless in the community during the winter in freezing temperatures. The congregation's commitment to service is also represented by the Rector, the Rev. Susie Marin, with these words: "Every act of outreach is related back to the work of Jesus and the church. Everyone must feel some sort of ministry as they work in caring for others. A feeding ministry is far greater than just food."

*A central concept is that of the "ever-widening circle," by which those engaged in leadership roles in the Church seek not to close ranks and narrow the power circle, but to draw increasing numbers of persons into the shared leadership patterns.*

"Creating a hospitable environment for Mutual Ministry," Tom Ray & Jim Kelsey

The needs of the homeless are also addressed through outreach done by the small congregation at **St. Elizabeth's, Brighton**. Like Windsor, Brighton is no longer considered completely rural and has a diverse population. Although St. Elizabeth's already small congregation shrunk substantially during the pandemic, its ministry to the homeless, started in 1995, continues nonetheless. Originally operated by the church for several years, the City of Brighton took over service to the homeless, with the congregation offering significant support. The nonprofit Almost Home provides shelter and services to help people find permanent housing. Each month as they find new homes, the people of St. Elizabeth's provide new residents with baskets of kitchen and laundry items to help them settle in. This is seen as an ideal ministry for elderly church members. St. John's Cathedral assists with a grant for the basket items. The effort extended by St. Elizabeth's indicates the potential for outreach support from larger churches, much like the example of the support that Little Shepherd, Crestone, receives from Church of the Ascension, Salida, and St. Andrew's is seeking for the Manitou Springs community.

Another program of St. Elizabeth's called "Laundry Love" helps mainly people in low-income housing to use a laundromat near the church. Congregants provide quarters for the machines and sometimes even do laundry for those folks. In addition, other services help people in the community, including youth doing yard work, assembly of food baskets for the food bank at Thanksgiving, and support of clothing drives at two local centers.

In the absence of a priest at St. Elizabeth's, Sunday worship services are led by supply clergy and lay people lead evening prayer on Wednesday evenings.

## Recommendations

Thriving in a small church environment assumes a well-engaged laity where clergy presence is currently or may become limited in the future. As the saying goes, it's important to "invent ministries around people's gifts."

**TC-1. *We recommend:*** the encouragement and assistance in preparing laity to be actively involved in worship planning and leadership.

- Provide short skills training courses online in leading liturgy and preaching to promote latent skills development of the laity.
- Encourage laity to offer worship alternatives other than Sunday morning such as Saturday evenings

**TC-2. *We recommend:*** more comprehensive offerings of formation and preparation for the laity to live out their baptismal ministry:

- Provide no-cost or inexpensive online confirmation classes, especially for members of churches with limited clergy presence.
- Provide adult faith formation sessions in online offerings about personal ministries.
- Either provide or encourage pastoral skills training through programs like the Stephen Ministry.
- Through further Task Force inquiry, identify and report successful lay development programs in Province VI, other Dioceses, and denominations.
- Encourage and provide facilitation for congregational discernment along with rectors or vicars of small and rural churches who are considering or planning retirement with the goal of reducing and reconfiguring worship and pastoral responsibilities.

**TC-3. *We recommend:*** facilitating and promoting outreach programs that engage leadership and congregations as well as friends and neighbors:

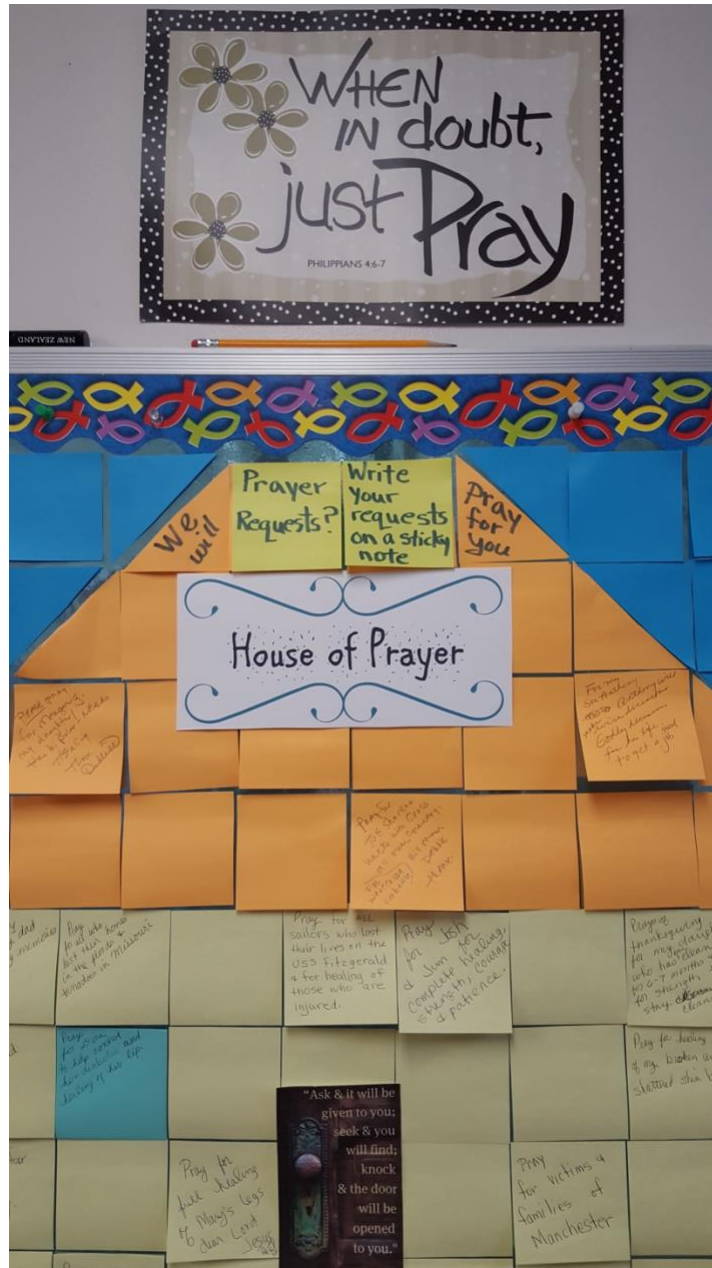
- Utilize missionaries, deacons, or other facilitators in small rural churches to develop vision statements aimed at matching available and obtainable resources to address community needs.
- Continue regional grants for missional purposes and collaboration
- Encourage congregations to re-purpose under-used space, facilities, or grounds for missional purposes and outreach activities in the community.

**TC-4. *We recommend:*** building and reinforcing a community of interest and/or an affinity group among small rural churches:

- Establish a Small Rural Church Corner on the diocesan website.
- Organize regional or sub-regional meetings on topics of special interest, such as dealing with clergy vacancies, effective outreach or use of LPLs in partnerships.



- Provide technical assistance or training for the use of technologies that may help off-set the sense of remoteness.
- Connect small rural churches that share common outreach concerns, especially food insecurity, that many already address.



Prayer Wall – Prince of Peace, Sterling

## Appendix A

### List of Small and Rural Churches in the Diocese of Colorado

**(Target mean = 25 Average Sunday Attendance, 2019<sup>2</sup>)**

Based on 2019 Parochial Report Data

-Region-	- Congregation -	2019 ASA
FRONT RANGE		
	Grace, Georgetown	10
	St. Paul, Central City	11
HIGH PLAINS		10
	Peace in Christ Episcopal-Lutheran, Elizabeth	28
	Prince of Peace, Sterling	10
	St. Charles the Martyr, Fort Morgan	31
	St. Elizabeth, Brighton	17
NORTHWEST		
	St. John the Baptist, Granby <sup>1</sup>	30
	Trinity, Kremmling <sup>1</sup>	8
	Cranmer Chapel, Winter Park <sup>1</sup>	N/A
	All Saints, Battlement Mesa <sup>2</sup>	26
	St. Barnabas, Glenwood Springs <sup>2</sup>	26
	St. John, New Castle <sup>2</sup>	21
	St. James, Meeker	30
	St. Mark's Church of Grace Lutheran-Episcopal	20
	Grace Episcopal-Methodist Fellowship, Buena Vista	16
	St. George, Leadville	14
SANGRE de CRISTO		
	St. Luke, Westcliffe	22
	St. Paul, Lamar	15
	St. Andrew, La Junta	35
	St. Andrew, Cripple Creek	24
	St. David of the Hills, Woodland Park	19
SOUTHWEST		
	St. Augustine, Creede <sup>3</sup>	17
	St. Stephen, Monte Vista <sup>3</sup>	25
	All Saints in the Mountains, Crested Butte <sup>4</sup>	12
	Good Samaritan, Gunnison <sup>4</sup>	30
	St. John, Ouray	35
	St. James, Lake City	18
	Little Shepherd of the Hills, Crestone	N/A
	St. Michael, Telluride (seasonal)	N/A

<sup>1</sup> Grand County Partnership

<sup>3</sup> Upper Rio Grande Partnership

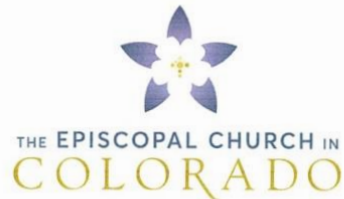
<sup>2</sup> Garfield County Partnership

<sup>4</sup> Gunnison/Crested Butte Partnership

<sup>2</sup> Numbers of attendees from the pre-Covid 2019 Parochial Report were considered the most recent and reliable data available.

## Appendix B

### Task Force on Small and Rural Churches



March 2, 2022

Dear ]

I am delighted to invite you to join the Small and Rural Church Taskforce for our Diocese. As you know, I believe these churches are the heart of our Diocese in so many ways and are necessary for us to thrive as the Body of Christ. Of the twenty-six people that applied, I felt you offer some unique gifts and talents to this holy work.

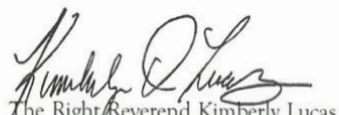
My hope is that in the next four to six months this taskforce will be complete a report to our Diocese. I am sure there may be other issues that will be in your report, but your charge is to address the following as a minimum:

- what clergy support can and could look like in smaller rural congregations
- the role of Lay Pastoral Leaders and other lay leaders in the liturgical, administrative, and congregational life of rural churches
- how our entire Diocese and Office of the Bishop can support these congregations
- how small rural churches cannot survive but thrive for years to come
- Explore what other successful models from around the country that support small rural churches
- Listen to leadership in small rural churches and voices across our Diocese

As with many things in the Church today the challenges are many and so are the opportunities for small rural churches. I hope you will push past your comfort zone and bring new and exciting ideas for us to explore as a Diocese. I have asked the Rev. Canon Alex Dyer, Canon for Missional Advancement and Congregational Vitality, to support you in this work. Other members of my staff can assist as needed. Please let Alex know if you are available **Tuesday, March 15 from 6:00 pm - 7:30 pm** for a virtual meeting to begin to organize your work. Please RSVP to the Rev. Cn. Alex Dyer ([alex@episcopalcolorado.org](mailto:alex@episcopalcolorado.org)) for the meeting by March 8.

Congratulations on your appointment and my prayers will be with each of you as you undertake this important work.

In Christ,



The Right Reverend Kimberly Lucas  
Bishop of Colorado

## Appendix C

### Potential Questions for the Lay Pastoral Leaders Interviews

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- What kind of support would you like to see from the Diocese regarding the Lay Pastoral Leader program?
- Are the bi-monthly meetings with Canon Alex enough, or were they? (Canon Alex has resigned, and Canon Lucy Amerman is currently taking his place)
- Once you realized you wanted to become an LPL, what kind of formal discernment process did you have to go through.
- When, where, and how did you receive your LPL training?
  - Was it in person with a Priest mentor?
  - Did you have any meetings with members of the Diocese?
  - Did someone from the Diocese come over for the officiating of your becoming a LPL?
- How did the congregation react to having a Lay Pastoral Leader?
  - Was there any resistance in your church towards an LPL?
  - Did people consider it fortunate to have the Holy Eucharist Administered by a Lay Pastoral Leader?
  - Do people not come to church, on purpose, when a LPL is Administering the Sacraments?
- Can your church afford a full or part time priest/vicar?
- Is there any desire to form a partnership with another church for financial reasons, mainly to employ a priest?

## Appendix D

### List of Lay Pastoral Leaders – Episcopal Diocese of Colorado

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May, 2022

Nancy Abbott	<i>Trinity, Kremmling</i>
Mary Anderson	<i>Prince of Peace, Sterling</i>
Susan Cotterman	<i>St. Peter the Apostle, Pueblo</i>
Leslie Daniels	<i>St. Paul's, Lamar</i>
Eleanor Foley	<i>St. Peter the Apostle, Pueblo</i>
Carla Howard	<i>St. Peter the Apostle, Pueblo</i>
Jan Jacobs	<i>St. Augustine's, Creede</i>
Betsy Leonard	<i>All Saints, Battlement Mesa</i>
Diane Parker	<i>St. Stephen's, Monte Vista</i>
Alan Rayne (retired)	<i>St. John's, New Castle</i>
Rob Rose	<i>St. John's, Ouray &amp; St. Michael's, Telluride</i>
Rich Rosene	<i>Trinity, Kremmling</i>
Doug Saxton	<i>All Saints, Battlement Mesa</i>
Pam Strohmeyer	<i>St. Barnabas, Glenwood Springs</i>
Tamaira Terry	<i>St. John's, New Castle</i>
Carrie Brown Trujillo	<i>St. Andrew's, La Junta</i>
Frank Walter (retired)	<i>St. Augustine's, Creede</i>

## Appendix E

### Lay Pastoral Leaders Comments

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*Small and Rural Church Taskforce Summer 2022*

#### **Mary Anderson, Prince of Peace – Sterling (High Plains Region) No Priest**

Some information about Prince of Peace: Mary informed me that Steve Hagerman retired August 2021. Currently as of tomorrow, July 26<sup>th</sup>, 2022, there is a meeting between the Diocese of Colorado, Prince of Peace, and retired priest Jeff Krantz to discuss the possibility of Jeff becoming the vicar (partnership?). For the last year, Prince of Peace has had a supply priest once a month, who would bless the sacraments to enable their LPL, Mary Anderson, to conduct the Administering of the Reserved Sacrament by LPL service. Prince of Peace and St. Charles Fort Morgan might have had a partnership years ago.

Regarding what kind of support from the Diocese would be helpful: Mary indicated that it would be refreshing, and spiritual renewing to have some access to continued learning. For example, in the last year or so the Diocese offered a training in writing sermons. More of this, and suggested reading would be helpful.

Another idea is to post the highlights of the LPL meetings online or via email, so the LPLs that can't attend the meetings are in the loop with the discussion.

Regarding the bi-monthly meetings, Mary stated that she would attend a monthly meeting easily because she is retired, but Mary is sympathetic to the LPLs that are working a full-time job. She thinks this would be hard for them, so bi-monthly is fine. Mary realizes that not everyone can make the meetings but did like the idea that if there were alternate meeting times in order to accommodate those that work, that would be the best solution for inclusiveness.

As far as relicensing and the LPL program, Canon Alex was good at assuring them that the LPL program was supported, but at the same time there is a feeling that "they don't count." For instance, in getting questions answered or a follow through for relicensing.

#### **Nancy Abbot, Trinity - Kremmling (Northwest Region) Clergy: The Rev. Matthew Frey**

Some information about Trinity: They are a small church of retired professionals, and since the pandemic occurred, they are down to six to eight faithful people.

Nancy (78) admits she is computer illiterate and does not do well with Zoom, so the bimonthly meetings are a challenge, and overall feel they aren't effective and are restrictive. She prefers the in-person training and follow up retreats.

Regarding what the Diocese can do for the LPL program, Nancy would like to see Training and Relicensing programs to begin again.

Nancy's training was mainly with Lou Blanchard (formerly in the Bishop's office) and the retreats to Cathedral Ridge with Bishop Rob O'Neill. She stated that the retreats

were meaningful and the best experience of her life. She was surrounded by like-minded individuals wanting to serve God and their churches by becoming a Lay Pastoral Leader.

**Rich Rosene, Trinity - Kremmling (Northwest Region) Clergy: The Rev. Matthew Frey**

More information about Trinity: Rich reiterated that their ASA is eight people. Right now, there is no one interested in training to become an LPL, so Nancy Abbott and Rich Rosene continue to offer LPL services. Every fourth Sunday, Fr. Matthew Frey, St. John the Baptist, Granby will offer a 4:00pm service for the Trinity congregation. Granby is thirty miles away. Rich has no idea if official papers were signed, making them a partnership with St. John's Granby. They have tried over the years, in the 80s and 90s to make an official partnership, but something seemed to always happen before it got signed, like the priest leaving. The last six to eight years, Trinity has been helped by St. John's making a 'loose' partnership where the priest will come to Trinity. They pay St. John's \$5,000/year, a quarter of their yearly income for this arrangement. This is how the LPLs get their consecrated sacraments. Rich has been an LPL for about ten years.

Regarding support from the Diocese, Rich feels that the Diocese is doing a good job. Admittedly, Rich has missed meetings because he does not check his email often or can't locate the email with the meeting information but thinks it would help him and people like him to get a reminder email with the meeting link embedded. Rich would like to see online classes offered for continuing education purposes, so he could study or view them when it is convenient for him. However, Rich enjoys the in-person retreats, and would attend if possible. (Rich is supposed to be retired, but isn't in a sense, and his wife works, so their time is precious when they can get away.)

As far as whether or not the bimonthly meeting are enough, Rich thinks they work for him, as stated, it is more his fault when he does not make a meeting.

**Betsy Leonard, All Saints - Battlement Mesa (Northwest Region) Clergy: The Rev. Kimberlee Law**

Some information about All Saints: All Saints partners with two other churches, St. Barnabas Glenwood Springs, and St. John's New Castle. Together they are the Episcopal Church in Garfield County. All Saints has two LPLs, Betsy Leonard and Doug Saxton. They alternate Sundays with the priest, the Rev. Kimberlee Law, so there are two LPL led services per month and two Holy Eucharist services.

The support Betsy would like to see from the Diocese is regular retreats at Cathedral Ridge with other LPLs. At these retreats she would like to see 'Sermon Training' and 'Pastoral Care Training' offered as part of the workshops. She personally enjoys getting together in person to exchange feedback from her peers, and would like to get feedback on "Are we reaching out to the parish (enough)?" Betsy would also like the priest to sit in on an LPL led service, better yet, on each LPL that works with their priest.

The bimonthly meetings were enough and accessible for Betsy, but not everyone attends, and it seems to be the same people. Betsy is concerned for the partnership

vicar and would like to know how she is doing. She feels that this is the arena to find out but has never had the chance during one of these meetings.

The concern of relicensing is really about the LPLs and our small congregations. If the LPL fails to relicense or is prohibited from continuing service, there may be no one to step up to do the training and service. Also, if the LPL program is reviewed or updated in the future, she would like to know why the LPLs are not supposed to read the Gospel, and why they can't go behind the altar while performing the service.

Betsy's discernment for becoming an LPL was when Fr. E.J. Rivet approached her and told her she would be a good candidate. Betsy felt she didn't have enough knowledge of the Bible. Still, she engaged in a yearlong training with Fr. E.J., mentored weekly, and read eight books in that year. As it turns out, Betsy found she did have the calling to become an LPL, and now says that if the church could afford a full-time priest, she would be sad not to be a Lay Pastoral Leader.

### **Doug Saxton, All Saints - Battlement Mesa (Northwest Region) Clergy: The Rev. Kimberlee Law**

Doug says he's content doing what he's doing but thought that he could have used more preparation and help dealing with grief and dying. He spent four years going through EFM (Education for Ministry), a program through Sewanee. "While EFM did not prepare me directly in any way that I am aware of for LPL duties," Doug says, "it more than made up for it in the area of faith formation." His partnership vicar supervised the education. While his whole heart is in this ministry, he finds that the monthly meetings haven't been very worthwhile. Ann Fleming (former Canon) came to St. Barnabas Glenwood Springs and presided over his licensing. He has been an Episcopalian for 40 years so has had some good background before becoming an LPL.

The congregation embraced the LPL service because there would have been no Communion without it. St. Barnabas can't afford to pay a full-time priest, so they want to be able to keep the LPL program. They are in partnership with two other churches, St. John's Newcastle and All Saints Battlement Mesa. Doug says an LPL "should not be expected, by default, to take on any other leadership role that has been vacated by a priest or other individual, although it's likely some will be willingly assumed. I think most of us primarily stepped forward to lead worship." As it is now, he is responsible for one service per month.

### **Pam Strohmeier, St. Barnabas - Glenwood Springs (Northwest Region) Clergy: The Rev. Kimberlee Law**

Some information about St. Barnabas: St. Barnabas is one of three partnership churches in the Episcopal Church in Garfield County. They share a priest with All Saints Battlement Mesa and St. John's New Castle. St. Barnabas has the priest three times a month, relying on the LPL for the fourth week. This is to enable the shared priest, the Rev. Kimberlee Law to have fellowship with the St. John's congregation.

The support Pam would like to currently see from the Diocese regarding the LPL program is clarification for the relicensing. Also, Pam would like to meet with other LPLs regionally. She thinks it would be a helpful addition to the Cathedral Ridge



retreats, and hopes they are reinstated. Pam doesn't feel that the Diocese is positive about the LPL program and feels sure that there are other churches and priests that would benefit from the flexibility of having an LPL.

Pam's training was done with their priest, the Rev. Wendy Huber, along with Michelle Alford (St. Barnabas). There were online classes, Pam and Michelle met to study and discuss material, and they met with Rev. Wendy in her office for training. There was no direct training with the Diocese, but Ann Fleming did offer some direction, and toward the end of their training a zoom meeting was held with a seminarian student giving tips about preparing and presenting sermons. Pam feels that her career as a counselor gave her added confidence and ability in Pastoral Care, and insightfully thinks other LPLs have strengths in their LPL duties from their past or present jobs. Pam's final process of becoming licensed was completing the Safeguarding God's Children and Eucharistic Minister Training.

### **Tamaira Terry, St. John - New Castle (Northwest Region) Clergy: The Rev. Kimberlee Law**

Some information about St. John's: St. John's belongs to the Episcopal Church in Garfield County along with St. Barnabas and All Saints. They have never had a full-time priest since their founding in 1909, and in the last 50 years have utilized Morning Prayer for worship services regularly. Naturally, St. John's was eager to start the LPL program.

Tamaira would like to see support from the Diocese in adding another online meeting time with Canon Alex, accommodating those people that can't attend the current meeting time because of work. She makes herself attend some of the meetings, even though she should be sleeping and getting ready for her night shift in secular work. Partly because of this, Tamaira does not feel that the Diocese values their time as LPLs. They are volunteers, but not as valuable as the priests, yet they are often treated like a paid employee of the Diocese in what the Diocese expects of them. Tamaira noted that the Diocese brought back the retreat this year, but it is being held on a Tuesday (?), Wednesday, and Thursday, not conducive to a full-time employee at City Market. In addition, she would like to see the Diocese offer training to those that might be interested. Tamaira is anxious about the LPL program being in jeopardy from comments that Canon Alex has made. She would like to see relicensing take place or suspend it all together.

Tamaira loves God and loves bringing people to God, so her discernment process was straight forward when given the chance to become an LPL. Tamaira met with the Rev. Wendy Huber after Bible Study once a month for a year. There was also reading material, and some online commitments. She attended the retreat at Cathedral Ridge and thought it was helpful but received the most help and encouragement from Michelle Alford (St. Barnabas) and Betsy Leonard (All Saints). In the end, Ann Fleming came over from the Diocese to officiate Tamaira into the role of Lay Pastoral Leader.

### **Leslie Daniels, St. Paul - Lamar (Sangre de Cristo Region) No Priest**

Some information about St. Paul's: Leslie (71) informed me that their parish has plenty of money and could afford a full-time priest, but their numbers are small, eleven to

eighteen people on a Sunday. They used to share a priest with La Junta. Leslie has held these positions at St. Paul's: Treasurer, Senior Warden, and now Lay Pastoral Leader.

Regarding support from the Diocese, she and others feel like 'they' (the Office of the Bishop) don't know them at all. It seemed that Canon Alex was discouraging, and not much is gained from attending the bimonthly meetings. Leslie enjoyed the Cathedral Ridge LPL gatherings, the speakers, and the workshops, such as those given to help them with their sermons/homilies.

Leslie's training consisted of Lou Blanchard assigning quite a bit of reading, and some mentoring by a priest, at first online. She also attended two years training at Cathedral Ridge, for combined LPL workshops and Church Development Institute.

### **Carrie Brown, St. Andrew – La Junta (Sangre de Cristo Region) No Priest**

Some information about St. Andrew's: ASA amounts to fourteen faithful people. They cannot afford a full-time priest, and in the past have partnered with St. Paul's, Lamar. St. Andrew's has a parsonage, and during that partnership there was some concern the priest spent more time in La Junta than Lamar, creating hard feelings. The churches shared Jennifer Shadle who retired and is now serving part-time at St. Peter the Apostle, Pueblo. Carrie's son A.J. Brown was becoming an LPL at St. Andrew's and then went to college, ending his LPL position. St. Andrew's has shared services with the Lutherans.

Some information about Carrie Brown: Carrie is a music teacher in the community working full-time. Besides teaching, she has the responsibility of care taking two houses in La Junta. These facts make it hard for Carrie to attend the LPL meetings. Carrie started her LPL training under Mary Hendricks, who is now retired, so the LPL position is held only by her. They have not been able to have an LPL service on any regular basis because they can't get consecrated elements, thus she St. Andrews has had only one LPL-led service this last year. The Lutheran pastor informed Carrie that the elements blessed on a Sunday by a Lutheran pastor only can be used through Thursday of the same week, so this thwarts the LPLs use of them.

Regarding support from the Diocese, Carrie would like to see more online classes that offer tips on sermon writing, preaching, etc, but not necessarily a list of books to read. She would like the Safe Church classes to remain online instead of in-person, so she can just do them as needed, and when she has the time. The in-person retreats are the best for Carrie, and she finds spiritual time in attending them. The only hard part is when they are held and whether or not she can attend because of her work/life schedule.

### **Eleanor Foley, Carla Howard, Susan Cotterman St. Peter - Pueblo (Sangre de Cristo Region)**

Some information about St. Peter's: St. Peter's has shared and welcomed services with the Lutheran congregation. The Episcopalians like their hymns. There apparently was an LGBTQ group that partnered with the church but then lost people and no longer use the church. The Average Sunday Attendance is less than twenty-five now.

Eleanor Foley (86) has been a faithful servant to St. Peter's and easily took up the call to become a Lay Pastoral Leader. She has trained other LPLs, possibly Carla Howard, a full-time Nurse Practitioner, and Susan Cotterman, a retired Social Worker and now full-time childcare giver to her three-year-old grandson. The three LPLs at St. Peter's have a close and respectful relationship with each other.

Of the three LPLs, Eleanor is available to log into the LPL meeting held every other month. She admits that she gets very little from them and does not understand why Canon Alex designates 30 minutes with the Vicars, 30 minutes with the Vicars and LPLs, finishing with and 30 minutes with the LPLs. Eleanor feels that being together as a whole group would build more trust and understanding. Also, Eleanor feels a bit challenged by the computer, and would like the other 2 LPLs at St. Peter's to be able to attend, but the time meetings are held keep both full-time workers, Carla and Susan, from attending. Currently the meetings are held Thursday's 3:30 – 5:00 every other month. When Eleanor pointed out the time difficulties for St. Peter's LPLs to attend, she found Canon Alex's response unsympathetic, and more like this was part of her/their job.

This sentiment leads to the feeling that they are a bit forgotten by the Diocese. That feeling is supported by the fact that all three LPLs have tried to renew their licenses, and nothing has been confirmed or denied, simply the Diocese has not communicated what is going on about the program. Meanwhile, through the pandemic they just kept doing what they had been, using the LPLs as always. All three LPLs would like more communication from the Diocese.

Eleanor's training was with Lou Blanchard, mostly, but heavily encouraged by Bishop Rob O'Neil. Eleanor states that the positivity they received from Bishop O'Neil was uplifting and encouraging to the calling they as LPLs had committed to. Eleanor misses this from the Diocese, as do Carla and Susan.

The Cathedral Ridge retreats and the workshops they attended were also a part of Eleanor's early training. She fondly remembers benefitting greatly from the priest who gave direction in sermon writing.

Eleanor pointed out that the Lay Pastoral Leaders program needs new LPLs. Her sage advice is this: *All potential Lay Pastoral Leaders should have Eucharistic Ministry training.* The stagnant atmosphere and non-communication from the Diocese on the matter is worrisome. All three want to renew their licenses. If that is not necessary anymore, they would like to be told they are fine to continue as LPLs at St. Peter's if they are continued to be called in that direction.

### **Carla Howard, St. Peter - Pueblo (Sangre de Cristo Region)**

Carla and Susan agree with the comments that Eleanor shared with me. In addition, I was able to get a few other comments from both Carla and Susan.

Carla has strong belief and embraces this scripture as the essence of the Lay Pastoral Leadership program:

*Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. **For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.** Matthew 18:19-20 KJV*

Originally, the meetings for the Lay Pastoral Leaders were held on a Saturday that enabled Carla to attend. When Canon Alex changed them to the weekday, she could no longer attend. Again, the feeling of being ignored comes to the surface. Also, the “mandatory” classes that the diocese is now asking LPLs to fulfill, such as Racial Education and Safe Church are redundant for someone like Carla who is a nurse and is required to take these trainings, along with Continuing Education in her field. Carla also does not understand why the diocese has asked LPLs to be relicensed. Her husband is a retired Episcopal Priest, and using him as an example, she infers that Priests aren’t relicensed again and again, so “Once you do the (LPL) training, make it timeless.”

Carla has attended the Cathedral Ridge Retreats and felt that workshops such as hints about preaching and about the liturgy itself were interesting and valuable.

### **Susan Cotterman, St. Peter - Pueblo (Sangre de Cristo Region)**

Susan believes in the LPL program and wonders how the small churches would have a chance of staying open if they didn’t have the LPL program. She is in hopes this taskforce will show the need and value that LPLs offer to the integrity of the church. Susan became an LPL during Bishop Rob O’Neil’s leadership. She reiterated what others have also said, “Bishop Rob was very encouraging and warm about the LPL program.” Susan also talks highly of the retreats and the hints that were given to them as a group by Bishop Rob on sermon prep and presentation. Also, he guided them to books to read. Susan believes that at that time and now, LPLs help keep the church doors open. In comparison, Canon Alex seemed to have a different opinion about the LPL role and Susan gets the feeling of being ignored by the Diocese.

### **Diane Parker, St. Stephen the Martyr – Monte Vista (Southwest Region) The Rev. J.K.Melton left June 2022. Currently, the supply priest is the Rev. Doug Neel.**

I believe the Diocese is working diligently to support LPLs through Zoom chats with Canon Alex, through quick responses to email questions, and this year, through the resurgence of an LPL Retreat. The LPL position is a fluid one that requires tweaking from time to time, and I believe the Diocese is doing what it can on top of all its other duties and issues.

Because I was still a full-time teacher, I thought I had a five-year window of discernment to fully embrace the position. As it turned out, my congregation had other ideas, so for a year, I soul-searched, had conversations with my priest, and had conversations with three current, at the time, LPLs from my own church and our partnership churches. I also completed all the online courses and whatever else was required by the Diocese. There was never a time I questioned my decision to become an LPL. Just went on fast-track!

My training was mostly online, but I did have a priest mentor and I was fortunate to have other LPLs as mentors. Attending retreats and various regional workshops for church leaders (not necessarily for just LPLs) also helped my growth.

I was able to meet for lunch with Ann Fleming, our “advisor” at the time when she was in the area. Most of the time, we visited via phone or by email. Both Lou Blanchard and Ann Fleming held periodic LPL Zoom/phone meetings with all LPLs. (Canon Alex is currently holding periodic Partnership Vicars/LPL meetings via Zoom/phone.) Lou Blanchard was able to officiate.

Our congregation has always embraced having an LPL. There was no resistance to having an LPL. Yes! People considered it fortunate to have the Holy Eucharist administered by an LPL. People not coming to church on purpose because we have an LPL service has never been the case in our congregation. We can only afford a part-time Vicar. We are already in a partnership.

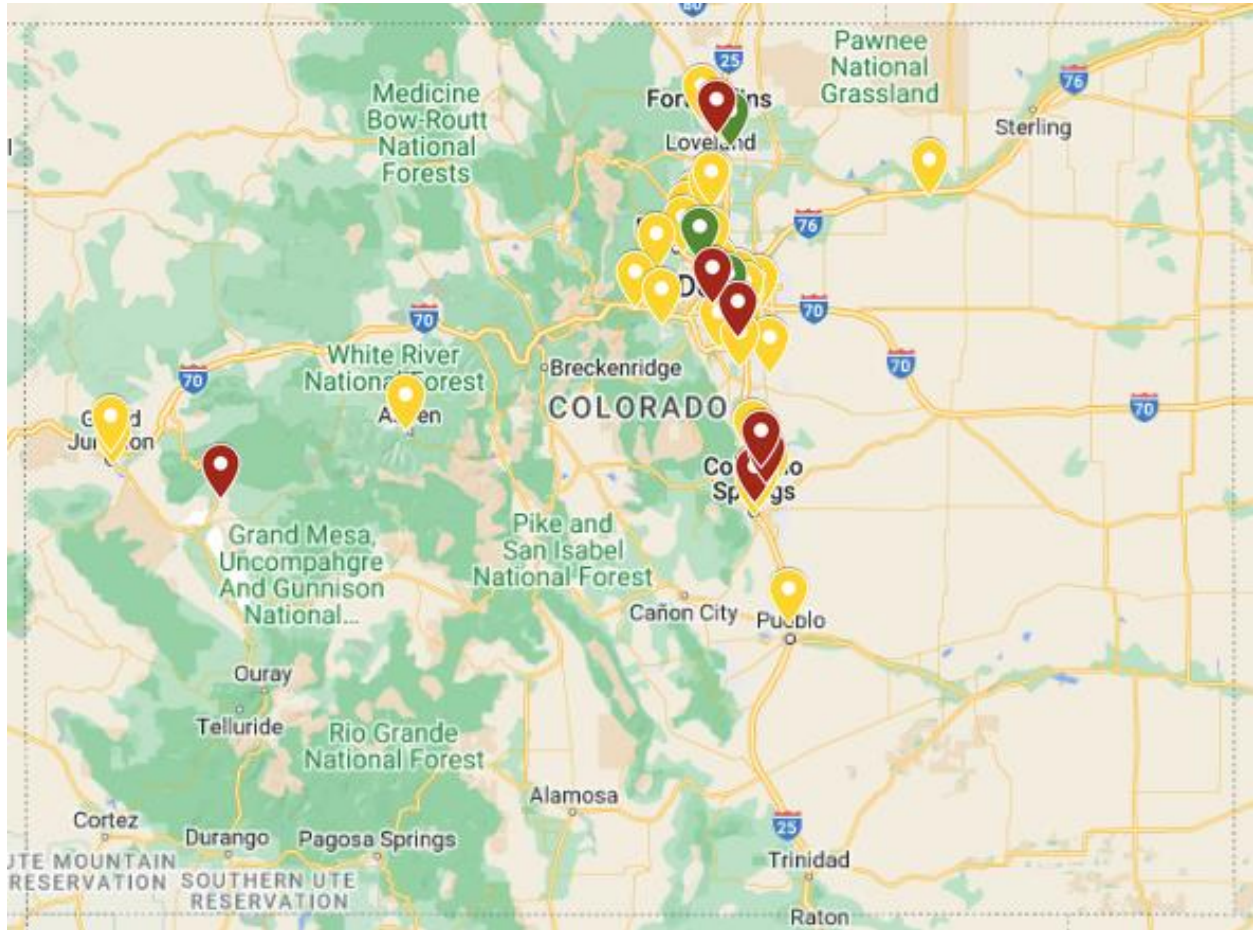
**Frank Walter, St. Augustine - Creede (Southwest Region) The Rev. J. K. Melton left June 2022**

For 15 years my sermon prep consisted of the following step: On Sunday I would read the lessons from two translations and then ask God for guidance. On Tuesday I would read the lessons again and pray again. Then I would read the William Barclay Commentary and be still again. On Wednesday I read the lessons, the comments from Forward Day By Day and Barclays and be still for a bit. On Thursday I was quiet and let the material percolate. On Friday I sat at the computer, placed my hands on the keyboard and let the message flow out. I read the message several times on Friday afternoon and Saturday and made required changes/corrections.

At the current time I have the sense that God is through with me and gives very little content to share. Hope this helps. \*Editor’s Note: Frank has been a licensed Lay Reader for many years before becoming a Lay Pastoral Leader. He is very grounded in the Episcopal Church.

## Appendix F

### Location of Supply Clergy, Diocese of Colorado



#### Legend:

- Red - Serving regular commitment
- Yellow - Unsure of supply commitments
- Green - Available to drive long distances

(As of 9/19/22)

## Appendix G

### **Example of a Policy to Allow Deacons to Lead Reserved Sacrament Communion (RSC) in Limited Circumstances**

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The ministry of the diaconate is far broader and more important than only serving at the altar. A deacon's primary responsibility is calling and leading their assigned community to serve "the needs, concerns and hopes of the world" beyond the walls of the church. A deacon assigned to a congregation should not be put in the position of being considered the convenient local supply clergy option for a congregation. The services of a supply priest to celebrate Holy Communion must be the primary option.

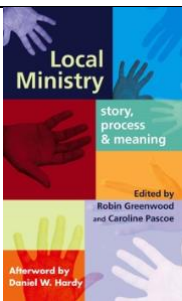
However, there are times when it is particularly difficult in remote, rural congregations to secure the assistance of supply clergy. In such instances, providing a Reserved Sacrament Communion (RSC) is a preferable option. The priest, in consultation with the congregation's deacon, should be authorized to make that decision. In cases where it is deemed appropriate for a deacon to provide liturgical support with RSC for a remote, rural congregation for an extended period of time, that decision should be made in conjunction with the Bishop. In these cases, a local priest should be assigned to provide the Reserved Sacrament and provide periodic Holy Communion services. It is imperative in such situations that the deacon's ministry in the community - and in leading the congregation to serve the "needs, concern and hopes" of their community - should not be diminished by liturgical demands.

## Appendix H

### Recommended Reading

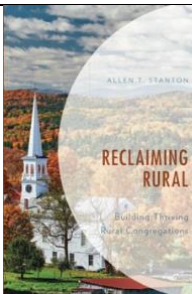


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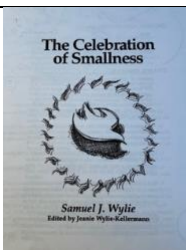


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[Link to pdf](#)



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[Link to pdf](#)