

THE GLOBAL EPISCOPAL MISSION NETWORK

MISSION STATEMENT

The Global Episcopal Mission Network (GEMN) is *Global*, believing that in Christ bonds of affection, grace and communion link people of faith throughout the world, and that each diocese grows in strength and witness as it proclaims Christ by word and action in the context of a worldwide communion.

The GEM Network promotes this global perspective on mission by assisting dioceses in developing global or world mission committees and providing them with information and tools for their work.

The GEM Network is *Episcopal*, committed to leadership in mission focusing on dioceses as primary agents of sending and receiving, and in the bishop as chief missionary, the outward and visible sign of the continuing Apostolic mission of the church.

The GEM Network is committed to providing venues in which bishops throughout the Anglican Communion can affirm and share their experiences of service in mission and to the education of diocesan mission leadership.

The GEM Network is *Missionary*, believing that every member of the church, every church and every diocese has been the recipient of the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ, has learned from others and grown into the fullness of Christ, and is sent to serve as was the Lord Jesus Christ. In mission the dynamics of salvation, wholeness and service are continually witnessed to, giving strength to all the members of the body and encouragement to communion within the body of Christ.

The GEM Network is committed to encourage dioceses throughout the world in sending and receiving missionaries and in offering other visible signs of encouragement, mutuality and communion.

The GEM Network is a *Network*, a dynamic instrument for engagement in, and knowledge of, the Network that exists in its fullness in the life of the whole Church. The GEM Network is committed to the complex, dynamic and multi-levelled network of relationships that constitute the Church as an organic whole, the body of Christ.

The GEM Network, through its educational institutes and materials, conferences, newsletters, web pages and other communications, provides an open and dynamic network of resources, information and personal contact in the engagement in mission.

(rev. 12.23.06)

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A DEFINING VISION

by The Rev. Dr. Mark Harris

Former Executive Director, The GEM Network

The Global Episcopal Mission Network envisions the diocese as the focusing lens in the discernment and development of global mission. This vision of the work of dioceses is grounded in the ancient principal of apostolic mission, in which the bishop and people are by virtue of their baptismal faith committed to proclaiming the Good News in Christ and working for the healing and reconciliation of the world. For much of the church's history this vision of mission has challenged the church's sometimes narrowly parochial sensibilities and its sometimes controlling institutional structures, empowering individuals to proclaim the Gospel in ways that transform and renew the world.

In the Episcopal Church, many bishops and dioceses see their call to apostolic mission as including a profound commitment to global mission. The widespread engagement in companion diocese relationships is a sign of this commitment, as is diocesan-based sending and receiving of missionaries. These activities can be seen throughout the Anglican Communion; they reflect a similarity of commitment to and interest in mission throughout the whole communion, and indeed the whole church universal.

For most of the twentieth century the Episcopal Church pursued its global mission work through agencies at the national level of the Episcopal Church. These agencies reflected to a greater or lesser extent the visions of global mission first expressed in more local contexts by mission minded lay people, clergy and bishops. Increasingly, however, these agencies have blurred the incarnational link between the local church and the larger ecclesial structures, and the vision has suffered. At the same time there has been on the part of some bishops an increased awareness of the bishop's role as the chief apostolic agent of the diocese – facilitator and agent of the mission vision both within and without the diocese.

In the last years of the century it became increasingly apparent to several bishops that the dioceses themselves had a central role in the work of mission - one that could not be relegated to national-level agents. These bishops working together with members of their dioceses developed the beginning vision for the Global Episcopal Mission Network. The Bishops who encouraged the formation of GEM Network also acknowledged that they, as bishops, had little opportunity to develop their particular roles as chief missionaries of the diocese, and had few occasions to share their missionary concerns with one another.

From these initial sensibilities a renewal of a vision for global mission located in diocesan context has found expression in the formation of the Global Episcopal Mission Network. This Network is guided by the following understanding of its work:

The GEM Network exists to support dioceses committed to mission on a global level. The GEM Network is a network of mutual encouragement among dioceses engaged in global mission. As a network it is organic rather than mechanical, unbound rather than bound, a product of relationship rather than of structure. GEM Network fosters and encourages among those who are part of its effort, the responsible sending and receiving of Christians in mission. In the support of diocesan role in sending and receiving of Christians called to share their gifts, GEM Network affirms the mutuality of mission and hospitality central to a worldwide fellowship of dioceses committed to building up the body of Christ.

The GEM Network was born in the conviction that if dioceses are to exercise their central role in mission, greater emphasis on the development of diocesan skills and abilities in global mission are necessary. GEM Network provides a series of opportunities and tools from which member dioceses committed to the tasks of global mission and to equipping their leadership for engagement in global mission draw spiritual, intellectual, and experiential support. These include conferences, handbooks, consultants to dioceses, a website which acts as a clearinghouse and bulletin board for information, and forums for the discussion of global mission activity.

The GEM Network affirms the role of the bishop as chief missionary of the diocese and works to encourage and expand the apostolic character of this office. The GEM Network exists to support the bishops of the Episcopal Church in sharing their experience, hopes, and visions as chief apostolic missionaries of this Church. The GEM Network encourages and will provide opportunities for bishops to reflect together on their leadership in mission, as well as opportunities for discussion of mission between bishops of the Episcopal Church and bishops from other Provinces in the Anglican Communion.

The GEM Network is committed to being an instrument of mission for the whole church, whose location is always situated in bishop-and-people-in-community, and whose vocation is always universal, for the whole of creation. In this the GEM Network proposes to be an instrument of unity in the Anglican Communion – a unity of focus in mission.

(rev. 12.23.06)