

## Your Pledge Makes It Possible: Mission Network

*The second in a series of articles on the mission and ministries of the Episcopal Church in Southern Virginia.*

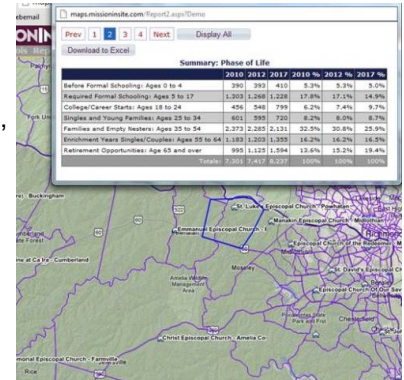
Each congregation and ministry center in the Diocese of Southern Virginia is a mission outpost, tasked with making the Gospel known both to its members, and through its members and programs, to the larger community and the world. Therefore, one of the primary functions of the Mission Network is to facilitate and encourage congregational vitality and congregational development. Additionally, the Mission Network, a team of clergy and lay leaders from around the diocese, chaired by the Canon for Congregational Development, oversees the work of the outreach commission, addresses the special needs of small congregations, and distributes grants and loans it has available to resource congregations and ministries for their ongoing work. And because each of us is part of the Christ's body here in the Diocese of Southern Virginia, the pledge your church makes to the diocese helps support these activities.

What are some of the specific ways Congregational Vitality, Mission and Outreach has been encouraged through the Mission Network in the last twelve months? Here are a few:

- The "New Chapter" congregational vitality conference was held in Williamsburg, Dec. 2011. Participants from around the country learned ways to share the story of what God is doing in their congregations, and practical tools for reaching out and building up their church.
- The Asset-Based Community Development (community organizing) conference is being held in Petersburg Sept. 21-22, 2012, funded primarily by a Jubilee Grant from the Episcopal Church Center.
- On-site consultations and retreats are held with vestries, leadership teams, and congregations to help develop greater congregational vitality, develop mission and vision strategies, encourage multi-church collaboration, and where necessary, develop plans for re-development. "Thanks again for your leadership [at our vestry Mutual ministry review.] I felt it was effective, leading to some concrete objectives for the year." ~ The Rev. Dr. Ross M. Wright.
- "Mission Insite", professional demographic data, is available to members from each church who wish to create an account. Congregations are plotting their members and finding out about the populations in their mission field.
- The Mission Network evaluated the Seeds of Hope grant applications for new and expanded outreach ministries, and the Executive Board just approved

\$21,722.00 to be distributed to nine different outreach and justice programs, which span from supporting feeding programs and youth development programs, to a Senior Pals program and a life skills development programs.

- \$8,000 in Emergency Maintenance Grants have been distributed in 2012, going to our smallest congregations to help fix roofs, water damage and heating units.
- Mission Initiative Grants of up to \$1000 per convocation were made available in 2011 to encourage local evangelistic efforts. \$7000 was granted, supporting Convocation-wide advertising and marketing in Convocations 1 & 9, scholarships to the New Chapter conference in convocations 8 & 4, a Job Seekers program (Needs-Based Evangelism) in Convocation 7, and seed money for an evangelism conference in Convocation 5.
- Outreach grants from the Feed My Sheep Program go to Jackson Field Home, Covington Boys Home, Mission of the Holy Spirit, and to help support Prison ministry for a total of \$15,991 in the 2012 budget.
- The Mission Network also serves as the advisory board for any M & M grants made by the executive board.



Mission Insite provides valuable demographic data to congregations.

Your church's giving to the diocese helps all of us participate in these significant ways of supporting outreach and increasing congregational vitality.



"I have truly enjoyed the cooking class, learning to use what you have to make a good but healthy meal for the family. May God continue to bless St. Thomas' church family." — *participant in St. Thomas', Freeman, Senior Pal "Back to Basics" cooking class, funded by a Seeds of Hope Grant.*