



## ***Nehemiah Process***

### ***Guide Outline***

**October 15, 2008**

**Overall Theme: "Don't know Can't nor Fathom Grace"**

#### ***✦ Overview of the Nehemiah Process:***

1. The prophet Nehemiah is the strategic genius who empowered the inspired Word from Ezra to find root and prosper. Nehemiah's greatest achievement was building the walls of Jerusalem so that the people of God would have a place to worship and therefore recapture their identity lost when Jerusalem was conquered in 597 B.C. The walls were intended to be a beacon through which the people of God could be transformed and therefore assume their intended purpose of becoming co-creators with God in transforming all of human life. In essence, the walls were created to be permeable rather than restrictive so that the Word and Light could continuously radiate outward!
2. The Nehemiah Process is dedicated to transforming leaders who can become co-creators with God in transforming lives.

#### ***✦ State of the Church in the USA: Why a need for the Nehemiah Process.***

1. It is our collective opinion that the Episcopal Church as well as most "Main Line Churches" in the USA are not "going to hell in a hand

basket!" There are certainly challenges before us and there is no question that if certain DNA changes are not initiated soon, there will be considerably more suffering (decline in Average Weekend Attendance and Plate/Pledge Income) than has presently been experienced.

1. Regardless, there are many admirable ministries taking place in most churches across the diocese, equally in small, medium, and large size churches. There are, however, notable settings in which decline and viability of ministries has occurred due to demographic changes, conflict, or leadership failure.
2. The context of ministry in the Diocese of Southeast Florida has changed dramatically over the past 20 years. Approximately 30% of our churches have failed to respond as creatively as their community required. Adapting to change is very challenging but an essential part of church life.
3. Finances of most church ministries have adequately increased to creatively meet the increasing demands of ministry. Tragically, too many churches have continued to believe that they are immune from the cultural and financial changes thrust upon them and have failed to adjust their ministries accordingly.
4. Our evaluation of the Plate/Pledge Income and Average Weekend Attendance (AWA) of the Diocese of Southeast Florida from 1999 to 2007 reveals a steady overall increase in Plate/Pledge Income with a corresponding decrease in AWA. The net effect on our diocesan churches is that the dwindling numbers of members continue to give adequately to the financial needs of the church until such time as the financial demands exceed the ability of the declining membership to sustain a viable and attractive ministry. As of January, 2007, the Diocese

of Southeast Florida has approximately 40% of her churches who are unable to sustain a viable ministry without increasing financial support from the other churches. An even cursory examination of the data shows that this trend will only increase and even accelerate over the next 2 to 4 years. There are churches at this moment that are not viable.

5. Reality of Clergy Life and Ministry: Many clergy are too busy; overworked (60-75 hours/week, 6.5 days/week); unfocused; under trained (especially in leadership skills & business practices); unsupported; under funded; overwhelmed by too many expectations; dealing with increasing demands without proper staff and funding; experiencing increased conflict and involuntary terminations. They are often insecure in their leadership role, their abilities, and too exhausted to follow Susy Miller's adage on leadership, "**Leaders Lead**". The challenge for clergy is to carve out time, seek change, and receive appropriate coaching support, funding, and training. Failure to do so results in clergy stagnation which eventually permeates all aspects of parish life.

#### ✦ ***Transformed Leadership: How do leaders change?***

1. **Bottom line:** Leaders have to be self-motivated and life-long learners in order to improve. If the desire to improve leadership skills is not present, then little is going to change except for raising the disillusionment, hopelessness, and despair factor in the leader. In all honesty, it would be better for the leader and all concerned if the leader would seek a different placement or even vocation.

2. John Maxwell writes, *"...people change only when they hurt enough that they have to, learn enough that they want to, or receive enough that they are able to."* (Leadership Gold, p. 66-67). He also wrote about the process of leadership development: *"You have to go through a process to improve. That takes patience, perseverance, and intentionality."* (p. ix)
3. Due to the circumstances described above, change for clergy is challenging pilgrimage paved with numerous frustrations, hazards, and mini-successes
4. Bob Gass has an interesting perspective on the challenges and rewards of leadership development. He writes, *"It takes courage to change when staying as you are feels more comfortable. If you're willing to leave your security zone, step out in faith and follow God, you'll be tested. But you'll also reach heights you thought were beyond you. And you'll go further than others who possess greater talent than you do."* Word for You Today, Bob Gass, Monday, July 21, 2008 meditation on "Courage", p. 30.

#### ✦ **Critical Issues**

Here are a few of the critical issues that must soon be enthusiastically and creatively addressed with commitment, prayer, wisdom, funding, and wisdom over the next five (5) years.

1. **Relationship and Transformation:** See Diocesan Vision Statement and Mission Statement ([www.diosef.org](http://www.diosef.org)) plus the Mission of the Church statements in the Book of Common Prayer's Catechism.

- a. Our relationship to Jesus Christ is the essential element in establishing and sustaining a healthy church. If this relationship is a pervasive, vigorous, and creative part of the church's life, chances are that it is healthy church although not always so.
  - b. Key Point: ***"Keep the Main Thing the Main Thing!"***
2. **Leadership Training:** Entirely too many clergy are depending on "leadership skills" that are less than effective within the 21<sup>st</sup> Century's ministry context. Much more training, funding, and support of clergy transiting to more effective leadership skills is required in order to increase the health of churches. Clergy, likewise, must commit themselves to raising their leadership level one or two levels over a 3 to 5 year period. ***"Leadership develops daily, not in a day."*** (John Maxwell's "The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership").
  3. **Leadership Team** recruiting, training, and funding are necessary.
  4. **The HII Process** (Hospitality, Invitation, & Incorporation) must be raised to a more prominent position within the parish, deanery, and diocesan structures.
    - a. Those who are and who are NOT yet members of the church might be more willing to join if the church takes seriously their desires, needs, and cultural context. They definitely need a reason to "come" but we often are out of touch with how to communicate with them. Far too little time is spend developing church ministries that "make a lasting difference" to those who are NOT yet members.
    - b. Example of adapting to the cultural context: Princess Diana's funeral was an interesting example of the church liturgy

- adapting itself to a world wide community. More work and prayer need to be part dynamic change agent.
- c. The church is far to “narcissistic”, that is, the church is often self-centered and self-absorbed.
5. **Funding** will need to be channeled into the most viable churches.
  6. **A cadre of “coaches”** is required in order to sustain long-term growth.
  7. **A Brutally Honest Assessment** of the health of the 10 Systems of the Church is essential. (See Appendix A).
  8. **Training** must be flexible enough to fit the ministry “context” of the church.
  9. **Improve the Sunday experience.** Sunday is the primary event when people come together for fellowship, prayer, worship, and relationship renewal.
    - a. Hospitality – this is probably the most important issue in sustaining the viability of a healthy church. Members and visitors are immediately impacted by the overall atmosphere of the church within the first 10 minutes of their arrival. Attention to this reality vastly increases the transcendent impact upon the worshipping community and the inclination for visitors to return.
    - b. Music – genre needs to be contextual for the community and for those who are as well as those who are NOT yet members. Multiple and varied instrumentation is a key element in sustaining creative, transcendent, and relevant worship.
    - c. Preaching – challenging, biblical, contextual, relevant.
    - d. Liturgy that is contextual and well orchestrated.

- e. Announcements (in the program or verbal): Focus on two areas: "How is this church making a difference?" "How can you join in this mission?"
  - f. The quality should be sufficient to meet the basic standards of the community while not diminishing the relational aspect.
  - g. Technology works when it enhances the worship experience within the cultural standards of the community.
  - h. Allow God's gifts of joy and humor to flourish.
10. **Transformational Events:** One, two, three or more day events (retreats, Cursillo, missions, etc.), are the primary "transformation" vehicles for growing healthy churches.
11. **Acts of Compassion** will signal a church growing toward health.

## *Nehemiah Process*

### *Ministry Plan (Vision, Mission, and Strategic Plan)*

Any viable diocesan project geared toward improving the health of her congregations must be founded on a sound, time-tested, and viable Ministry Plan composed of a Vision, Mission, & Strategic Plan.

✦ **Part One**: The Vision & Mission of the Nehemiah Process.

#### **1. Diocesan & Nehemiah Vision**

- ✦ BRING THEM IN
- ✦ BUILD THEM UP
- ✦ SEND THEM OUT
- ✦ TEND THEIR NEEDS
- ✦ HARVEST GOD'S FRUIT

#### **2. Diocesan Mission**

*The mission of the Diocese of Southeast Florida is to make known to all people the transforming power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, including ALL, excluding none.*

#### **3. Nehemiah Process Mission**

The Nehemiah Process provides the strategic framework necessary for the implementation of the Diocesan Vision and Mission.

✦ **Part Two**: Nehemiah Process Mission, that is, "What do we hope to accomplish via our strategic framework?"

1. Establish, train, and fund a regional (diocesan/deanery/regional) coaching network within one year.
2. Focus: Creating healthier churches over a 3 to 5 year period.

3. Establish and Train the church's leadership team who can serve as change agents within the unique context of local parish.
  - ✦ Build on leadership strengths and manage weaknesses.
  - ✦ Initial Phase: Assist Clergy to grow at least ONE leadership level in 3 years.
    - a. Clergy develop a Personal Ministry Plan (Vision, Mission, Strengths Assessment, and Strategic Plan) within 3 months.
  - ✦ Ongoing Phase: Recruiting, Development & Training of the Parish Leadership Team
    - a. Leadership Team will develop a Parish Ministry Plan (Vision, Mission, and Strategic Plan) within 6 months.
    - b. Wise adage: Failure to plan is a plan to fail.
4. Engage in a brutally honest in assessment of the 10 Systems of a Healthy Church within 6 months.
5. The HII Process (**H**ospitality, **I**nvitation, & **I**ncorporation) is perhaps the single most important element in improving the church's health.
  - ✦ Establish a functional HII Process within one year.
  - ✦ Encourage each parish to have two HII-BHAGs per year.
 

BHAG = Big Hairy Audacious Goal

(HII-BHAG is a major church event designed to increase the Average Weekend Attendance (AWA) to levels approaching the Easter, Christmas, and Palm Sunday AWA).
6. Encouraging diocesan and parish structures that would stimulate the growth of healthy parishes.
7. Establish a culture of abundance and joy.

## ✦ **Part Three**: Key Elements to the Nehemiah Process

### 1. Key Theological Perspectives:

- ✦ Creation (Genesis: God said and is creating.);
- ✦ Incarnation (John: "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has never put it out." & "The word became flesh and dwelt among us full of grace and truth.");
- ✦ The Great Commandment (John: "My commandment is this: love one another, just as I love you.");
- ✦ Great Commission (Matthew: "Go, then to all peoples everywhere and make them my disciples..."); and
- ✦ Grace (Phil Yancey, *"What's So Amazing About Grace"*).

### 2. Two Key Scriptural Contexts

- ✦ Ezekiel 37: 9, "Tell the wind that the Sovereign Lord commands it to come from every direction, to breathe into these dead bodies, and to bring them back to life."
- ✦ Ezra 7-9; Ezra's Reforms
- ✦ Nehemiah: Nehemiah was the perfect strategist to fulfill Ezra and Ezekiel's prophecies.
- ✦ Nehemiah 1-6
  - a. Passion, Compassion, and Tears
  - b. Fasting
  - c. Prayer
  - d. Awareness of heritage and calling
  - e. Waiting & Listening to God
  - f. Wisdom in developing and enacting a strategic plan

### 3. Two Essential Questions found in a healthy church: Acts 22: 7 & 10

- ✦ *"Who are you Lord?"*
- ✦ *"What would you have me do?"*

✦ **Part Four**: Methodology

1. ***“Your system is perfectly designed to give you the results you’re getting.”*** W. Edward Deming. And, there is no guarantee that you will get the same results tomorrow that you got today!  
Assessment and Discernment of the Brutal Facts is essential.
2. Focus on the 10 Systems of a Healthy Church
3. Developing a system of coaches
4. Paradigm shift within Leadership Team to include the HII process.

✦ **Part Five**: Developing Key Leadership Traits:

1. Grace is absolutely essential. If God is not in it, it simply isn’t going to happen!
2. Vision, Passion, Compassion, & Determination:
  - ✦ The key leaders of the church must have a strong desire to make a lasting difference. The Transformational Experience of the Live, Death, & Resurrection of Jesus Christ is just so important...(see Grace). Not a rational thought but an experience that transforms.
3. Sacrificially Committed – “Servant’s Heart” - to live and proclaim the transforming experience of Jesus Christ & His Church.
4. Character: Honesty, Compassion, Confidence, Humble, Trustworthy.
5. Integrity, Transparency, Discernment, Trustworthy, Determined.
6. Wounded & Broken & Hurt & Angry but never give up or surrendering to being vindictive.
7. Expect the Best from Self & Others.
8. Self Examination, Counseling, Spiritual Director.

9. Life-Long Learners (Velcro Principle) - Hunger for Learning & Teachable Spirit.
10. Quality Mentors – Ability to seek out and learn from others.
11. Inspired by & Passion for others and ability to establish lasting Relationships.
12. Willing to take Risks.
13. Ability to learn from others.
14. Accountability to a group of peers and within the parish structure, e.g., the Vestry.

✦ **Part Six:** Tools for Growing a Healthy, Growing, Effective Ministry for Christ (See Appendix B)

1. Good to Great Principles: *Good to Great*, Jim Collins
  - a. Brutal Facts: Looking at the priorities of Jim Collins is key.
2. The HII Process, our reproductive system, is still lacking sufficient support, enthusiasm and implementation.
  - a. Radical Hospitality: Customer Service
3. Small Groups as Key to growing churches.
4. Stewardship
5. Kerry Casey: [www.fathers.com](http://www.fathers.com): Story about Football coach in Virginia HS berating Kerry. He said to friends that he was never going to play for that “racist” coach. When he got home and told his father, his father wisely commented, “Son, that coach is the winningest coach in Virginia history. He is testing your character, Kerry. And remember, you need the team more than the team needs you.” (Sermon on July 8, 2007 @ Christ the Rock Church). Rise to the occasion! Quality mentors raise people above to a higher standard.