



Diocese of Southeast Florida Congregational Development

The Nehemiah Process

Overview of the Nehemiah Process:

- ✦ 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!
- ✦ The Nehemiah Process is dedicated to transforming leaders who will be co-creators with God in transforming lives.

The Vision & Mission of the Nehemiah Process

✦ Diocesan & Nehemiah Vision

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

✦ 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.

✦ Nehemiah Process Mission

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

- *The Nehemiah Process is a process to guide church leadership teams for prosperous measurable results accomplished through education and other resources to improve, grow, and make disciples for the dynamic ministry of the church.*

Background of the Nehemiah Process

Soon after beginning his ministry as the spiritual leader of the Diocese of Southeast Florida, Bishop Leopold Frade wanted to make a difference and strengthen the ability of congregations “missionary outposts” to spread the gospel message. Additionally, The Episcopal Church and many mainline denominations had been experiencing a steady decline in members and the capacity for ministry for at least the preceding decade. Congregational development activities appeared to be a way to address the aforementioned decline. The Nehemiah Process is the method and mode developed to empower congregations in the diocese with tools to build up and enhance their ministries in their communities.

There are five primary concepts of the Nehemiah Process, all of which work simultaneously and are deeply interwoven with one another. The Nehemiah Process:

- Serves as a model for strategically developing a healthier church where the Gospel message can be proclaimed
- Fosters clergy growth by at least one leadership level
- Establishes a viable **Hospitality, Invitation and Incorporation (HII)** process in parishes
- Guides recruitment, formation, and training of parish leadership teams
- Encourages development of short and long-term parish ministry plans

With the blessing of Bishop Frade, a Nehemiah Steering Team was organized in 2002, under the guidance of Archdeacon Dr. Bryan Hobbs, to develop the strategies, techniques, and tools that would be used to help parishes to strengthen their ministries. Selection criteria for participating churches were established. Participant clergy were asked to select leaders from their congregations to be involved in the Nehemiah Process. Parishes were asked to sign a covenant to fully participate in the process for a two-year period. Meeting dates and places were set, invitations were extended, participant materials were secured and Nehemiah 2003 commenced in January 2003.

Stepping Out In Faith

Nehemiah 2003 began with ten (10) parishes. The primary focus was on assisting participant parishes to develop vision statements, mission statements, and ministry plans. Teaching aids included video presentations, books and other writings from experts in ministry and congregational development, use of a bibliography on related areas and actual presentations by members of the Nehemiah Steering Team. Participating parishes had assignments to complete between meetings. The Nehemiah Steering Team met regularly during the year to assess the progress or lack thereof, discuss what areas needed modifying, and to determine what steps were needed next. Potential evaluation criteria were developed to determine relative success of the Nehemiah Process.

Nehemiah 2004 included eight (8) parishes and mostly followed the Nehemiah 2003 process with a few modifications in materials and presentations. Lessons learned from 2003 were used to enhance the 2004 process.

Nehemiah 2005 addressed New Member Ministry, stewardship and growth barriers. Leadership revival and ministry planning conferences were held for the eight (8) participating parishes.

Nehemiah 2006 focused on five (5) parishes interested in growing in membership from 250 to 500 over a two year period to end on December 31, 2007. Vision-mission pursuit and work on church surrounding community demographics were explored. A component was added to address clergy personal vision for ministry plans and clergy leadership development.

In **2007**, the **Nehemiah Process** continued to focus on New Member Ministry, stewardship, sharing of vision/mission progress of the parishes, and review of parish organizational data. The emphasis was on sustaining a healthy and growing parish. This also involved youth ministry, discipleship, adult formation ministry and men's ministry. A clergy and lay leadership conference was held in the spring.

Nehemiah 2008 was a change from the previous years in that parish leadership teams were no longer the focal point for activities of the Nehemiah process. With continued use of the five Nehemiah Process concepts, clergy personal and leadership development were the major goals. About 30 clergy, along with one or two of their designated leaders, were invited to participate. Participating clergy were assisted in finding out their strengths and how to use their strengths and gifts to improve themselves,

enhance their leadership skills and their ministry. Nelson Searcy's, *10 Systems of a Healthy Parish* model was used as a building block for parishes to implement their Hospitality, Invitation and Incorporation (HII) Process and HII-BHAG (Big Hairy Audacious Goal) event.