

Challenges to overcome in achieving this missionary strategy:

All mission churches that want financial assistance from the Diocesan budget to help develop their ministry should be prepared to participate in special training events and workshops offered throughout the year by the Ministry Institute. The Board of Missions welcomes the opportunity to partner with them in their plans for development. Mission churches that only wish to perpetuate ministry to their existing members will be expected to have the level of clergy leadership that they can afford.

Financial assistance policy adopted by the Board of Missions and Diocesan Council:

In order to preserve funding for those mission churches that want to grow, the Board of Missions and Diocesan Council have decided to eliminate, in future years, mission assistance grants that are only designed to fund chronic deficits in congregations where there is no local plan to develop and expand ministry, or for stagnant or shrinking congregations unwilling to consider yoked or cluster ministry, or merger. They have adopted the following principles for considering requests for mission assistance grants, giving the highest priority to those requests that meet the first three criteria:

1. **Truly missionary work:**
 - a. Support of new mission churches, in which a plan for development that includes funding land purchase and initial construction of first-phase facilities, should be a top priority.
 - b. When a mission congregation presents a well planned proposal to meet real and urgent human needs, it should be a priority for the whole Diocese to partner with that mission church in that missionary work.
 - c. Unique missionary work: Some congregations feel called to make a special effort to attract and minister to a particular constituency. Support from the Board of Missions may be appropriate and desirable.
2. **Recovery from trauma:** There are times when a thriving congregation suffers a serious set-back due to some form of trauma: natural disaster (fire, flood, structural damage), or leadership factors (misconduct, sudden death, severe conflict). When a well thought-out plan of addressing that trauma in a way that will enable a congregation to recover its previous vitality is presented, the Diocese should support such effort with mission assistance.
3. **Consolidation:** Many of our mission congregations have inadequate facilities (too small sanctuaries, not enough classrooms or other ministry space, lack of parking), or are located so close to other Episcopal congregations that they cannot reasonably expect adequate growth to enable them to reach financial independence. When a congregation begins to recognize that reality and is willing to consider options toward consolidation (merger, yoking, regional ministry), assistance to help in consolidation should be given.
4. **Factors that would mitigate against continued mission assistance or consideration of a new request:**
 - Requests to fund chronic deficits with no plan for addressing it locally.
 - Shrinking or stagnant congregation unwilling to consider consolidation.
 - Unrealistic, uncertain and/or unsustainable plans for outreach.