The Episcopal Diocese of Vermont

Preliminary Capital Campaign Case Statement

Spirit and Energy:
A fundraising campaign to equip the saints for mission and strengthen our diocese for decades to come

For over 200 years Episcopalians in Vermont have grounded our lives in the Great Commandment to love God and our neighbors as ourselves. Since the days when Bethuel Chittenden rode on horseback through the young state of Vermont spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ among our villages, the Episcopal Church in Vermont has responded to changing cultural, economic, political and ethical challenges and opportunities for spiritual growth and ministry with courage and imagination.

Our essential work has not changed. Our commitment to “proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ” remains strong today. Faithfully claiming our heritage of service to the world and valuing that which continues to serve God’s mission provides a strong foundation for our future.

We boldly face the particular challenges of our time, including an increasingly secular culture, new understandings and practices of spirituality, declining membership, escalating human need, the aging infrastructure and need to “green” our buildings, and the immense environmental concerns of our time. Exciting opportunities abound in the growth of communication, environmental awareness, technology, the search for spirituality, and our desire for stronger communities.

Amidst change and opportunity, the essence of our work remains solid. With the faith of Abraham and Sarah, we gather our collective energy to step out in faith and go where God leads us. Eager to discover new ways of participating in God’s reconciling mission in the world we respond to the Holy Spirit’s energy moving among us and through us with trust and hope. That energy will help transform our own lives and our church in ways that champion God’s mission in the world.

Much as we understand that our challenges are deeper than money, we know the tools needed to do our ministry are, at least in part, financial. To move forward, we propose a major fund raising campaign that will give us the tools to carry out our goals:

✦ to care for God’s people gathered in our worshipping communities and beyond;
✦ to care for sacred places in our diocese, both buildings and open spaces;
✦ to care for God’s creation as individuals and as faith communities;
✦ to care for God’s church as we seek vibrant renewal.
This campaign offers tangible education, training, spiritual and financial support to the people and congregations of our diocese, in accordance with the decisions and plans expressed in our Diocesan Strategic Plan approved by Convention in 2010. It helps us reach out to others with the Good News of God’s love. It addresses the challenge of reducing our carbon footprint and strengthening our identity as stewards of God’s creation. Most importantly it promises a robust and growing Church for the future.

The Campaign for Ministry in Vermont

We propose a capital campaign spread over five years with a goal of $5,625,000 to be followed by an Endowment campaign for $5.5 million. The first phase includes five critical and intertwined ministries, as well as modest costs of the campaign.

Diocesan Convention 2007 authorized a process of discernment for a possible Capital Campaign in the Diocese of Vermont. The following five areas of devoted work and necessary funding have been identified by the Capital Campaign Discernment Committee in consultation with various diocesan committees and “stakeholder” groups. Each entity has developed a more thorough report that spells out the details of each proposed area of investment. These reports are available at www.dioceseofvermont.org.

Please note that the first five categories are immediate needs. The Endowment component of $5,500,000 would be sought following completion of these five components. However, designated gifts for Endowment will be gratefully accepted at any time.
Spiritual Formation: $975,000 immediate need

“.....to provoke one another to love and good deeds.” Hebrews 10:24

“Spirituality” is a primary word in all religious thought; while appropriately vague, unbounded and undefined, it is at the core of our search for meaning and purpose. Spiritual development and how we go about it lies at the heart of fulfilling the promises of Baptism. This ministry is an investment in the spiritual health, growth and formation of children, youth and adults of our diocese and a commitment to reach out beyond ourselves to offer the gifts of our Episcopal/Anglican tradition with a serious re-visioning of our ministries that are responsive to the spiritual needs of the wider community.

1. A Spiritual Development initiative in which the Diocese of Vermont will invest $75,000 per year for five years to establish the work and path for the future, including personnel devoted to this program: $375,000

2. An Innovation Fund providing grants to congregations for support of spiritual development programs, including new and creative ways of discovering God already at work in the larger community: $600,000

Earth Stewardship: $1,500,000 immediate need followed by $2,500,000 million endowment

“God saw all that he had made and it was very good” Genesis 1:31

The Diocese of Vermont is responding to the call to be stewards of all creation with leadership, deep commitment, courage and conviction. As Christians, we recognize our responsibility to address the damage being done to the environment. Being attentive to our buildings in their use of energy and the size of their carbon footprint offers a concrete opportunity to express what we profess to believe about our lives as stewards of God’s creation. Our research indicates that internal rates of return, along with energy savings achieved—although different from one project to another—have a strong potential for being robust, often 30% or more.

Based on the study and discussion of the Earth Stewards Committee of the Diocese of Vermont the following investments are proposed:

1. Establish a Congregational Energy Efficiency Grant Program for building assessment and improvements, such as insulation, weatherization, heating, lighting and related improvements: $1,500,000

2. Establish a permanent Endowment fund to provide grants and low interest loans to congregations seeking to install renewable energy systems (solar, geo-thermal, wind, etc.). $2,500,000.
Communications: $500,000 immediate need

“And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” Colossians 3:17

Communication among members of the Diocese, and reaching out to those seeking the spiritual possibilities of the Church, is an increasingly essential part of our work. From simple daily communication, resources and research, mission and ministry, and learning, to supporting our relationships with God and each other, communication is at the core of our formation and evangelism.

As part of this campaign, the Diocese will work to connect each person, congregation and parish through:

1. Publications, website, an electronic network of volunteers, e-news capability and media relations
2. A Spiritual Learning Center that combines in-person, electronic, DVD and retreat opportunities to learn, communicate and foster spiritual health and wellness.
3. Sharing the Good News of God’s love and offering opportunities to participate in God’s Mission throughout Vermont

This work will be integrated with other components of this campaign and supported by increased technology, the work of a part-time web and media specialist, and investment in volunteer connections among congregations. Staffing, program development, and technology costs are estimated at $500,000 over the next five years.

Rock Point:
Caring for Spirit and Environment: $1,360,000 immediate needs followed by $2,000,000 Endowment

“O be joyful in the lord, all ye lands. Serve the lord with gladness and come before his presence with a song.” Psalm 100

Certain places on this earth, some manmade, some natural, provide windows on the divine. Rock Point in Burlington is one such place: a place where the human spirit can both exult and be still in knowing God. As steward of Rock Point for over 150 years, the Episcopal Diocese of Vermont has preserved this precious landscape, an exclamation point of green in the increasing urban neighborhoods that surround it. We welcome over 10,000 visitors to the Rock Point property each year for everything from hiking the trails, to retreats and conferences, to meetings, worship, gatherings and outings of many kinds. Rock Point is also the home of Rock Point School, the Diocesan Office, the Bishop Booth Conference Center and the residence of our bishop.
The priorities of the Rock Point Board for the future mission and sustainability of Rock Point, and the costs related to responsible use and management of this special place include:

1. Safety concerns and repairs to buildings and infrastructure: $355,000
2. Reduction of our carbon footprint through energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy sources: $700,000
3. Establishing systems and partnerships for long-term financial sustainability: $50,000
4. Support for program ministries in the area of spiritual formation, ecological education, summer camp for children and youth, and outreach to the children and families of our neighbors in Burlington’s Old and New North Ends for five years while the long term plan for financial sustainability is implemented: $250,000
5. Rock Point Endowment Fund to provide an annual source of income for ongoing maintenance and property improvements: $2,000,000

Mission Farm: $990,000 immediate needs followed by $1,000,000 Endowment

“And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit.” 2 Corinthians 3:18

In 1797, the area was wilderness. But it was here that Josiah Wood established a farm for his family and built a house on what is now the current site of the Church of Our Saviour in Killington, Vermont. His daughter Elizabeth conveyed the church and its property to the Diocese of Vermont, and today the Church of Our Saviour and the retreat center known as Mission Farm sit on 177 acres of farmland (not currently under cultivation) and forests. This strategic property is located at the base of one the largest ski resorts in the United States. Opportunities for ministry and evangelism abound and can be fruitfully engaged by protecting, updating and enhancing the buildings for use as a diocesan spiritual life center in the southern tier of our diocese.

1. Expand and update the Mission Farm buildings to provide a sacred space in the southern tier of our diocese where people of all faiths can experience and practice the presence of God in creation: $740,000
2. Provide retreat, educational, and other programs for spiritual refreshment and growth, including new and creative ways of deepening and expressing spiritual life and faith: $150,000 for the initial three year program.
3. Model our diocesan commitment to environmental stewardship, reduce the carbon footprint of Mission Farm and significantly reduce operating costs by installing a geothermal heating system for all three of its buildings: $100,000
4. Create a Mission Farm Endowment Fund to provide an annual source of income for ongoing maintenance and property improvements: $1,000,000
Proposed Campaign Summary

Phase One
For Immediate Needs: $5,625,000

- Spiritual Formation $975,000
- Earth Stewardship $1,500,000
- Communications $500,000
- Rock Point $1,360,000
- Mission Farm $990,000
- plus Campaign Costs over a five year period $300,000

Phase Two
Endowment for Long Term Vitality and Sustainability: $5,500,000

Each of the programs proposed above requires ongoing support, only possible through assured income from an Endowment Fund that will augment regular annual gifts. Following a campaign to raise the necessary immediate funds for stewardship, energy, communication and spiritual formation, the Diocese will embark on the effort to expand its Endowment for the future.

The challenges facing the Church and our world are complex, and the solutions we have struggled to identify are equally complex. Much as we would find comfort in a simple answer, we know that our responsibilities as Christians require that we stretch ourselves to work on intertwined, concurrent, unsettling issues—and, to do so with courage, vision and the willingness to reach out to a wider community.

With this campaign we take essential steps to move forward, to be open to new ways for the Church to serve God and our neighbors, and to care for God’s people, places and all creation.