

Process for an Episcopal Mutual Ministry Review For the Episcopal Church

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An Episcopal Mutual Ministry Review (EMMR) is like a Mutual Ministry Review (MMR) that many congregations in the Episcopal Church conduct from time to time. However, there are distinct differences. This is intended to document a process that has been developed over the past 18 years and facilitating 7 EMMR's.

An EMMR is generally initiated by the Diocesan Bishop in coordination with the Standing Committee of the diocese. In some cases, an EMMR is part of the letter of agreement for the bishop. The frequency of conducting EMMR's can vary from yearly to once every few years, depending on the circumstances and needs of the diocese.

Generally, a consultant is engaged to facilitate the process. It is helpful for the consultant to have experience with MMR's if not EMMR's. In addition, experience and knowledge of the consulting process, human communications, grounding in the polity of the Episcopal Church and the facilitation of meetings are important qualifications for the consultant.

The general steps in the process are as follows:

1. A decision is made by the relevant parties to conduct an EMMR
2. Participants for the EMMR are identified
3. Questions are formulated for which participants will respond
4. Participants respond to the questions
5. A meeting with the participants to review and reflect on the answers and next steps
6. A report for the EMMR is issued by the consultant

The details of each of the steps are as follows:

A decision is made to conduct an EMMR

As mentioned, it's usually the Diocesan Bishop and the Standing Committee of the diocese who agree that an EMMR would be appropriate. There are times when other bodies within the diocese are also involved. The purpose of this review is to reflect on the past period in terms of how the Bishop and the various organizations of the Diocese have lived out their ministries together. The participants look at what can be gleaned from what has happened during the past time frame being reviewed and discuss creative ways to engage in future ministries. It's important to state that the EMMR is not a performance review of the bishop or the leaders of the various committees, commissions and ministries in the diocese. Rather it is an honest and clear-eyed view of how the various ministries of the diocese have engaged over the relevant time period and what helpful changes might be initiated for the future.

It's also important to be aware if there are any significant challenges currently facing the diocese. If so then some of the steps will probably need to be augmented to clearly define and address the challenges.

Participants for the EMMR are identified

It is generally important for participants to be a broad representation of folks in the diocese in terms of committees, commissions and ministries. Having both clergy and laity represented, age and gender representation, differing views on issues and geographical dispersion are all important. The number can vary from approximately 9 to 12. Experience has shown that too large of a group is unwieldy. Also, in general, diocesan staff are not included as participants.

It is possible to have more participants if the Bishop and Standing Committee feel strongly that it would be beneficial. This would probably require some changes to the meeting discussed below.

If there are significant challenges in the diocese, having participants from differing points of view would be important.

Proposed participants are sent an invitation to participate in the EMMR with some information about what it is and the process. It's important for participants to commit to answering some questions in a thorough and timely manner as well as attending an EMMR meeting.

Questions are formulated

Questions can be created by the Bishop in coordination with the Standing Committee. Other people may be involved as desired. The questions should be relevant to what has been happening in the diocese over the covered period and what the Bishop and Standing Committee are wanting reflections on.

Generally, 6 to 8 questions would be optimal. Therefore, careful formulation of the questions is important. The consultant will assist whomever is formulating the questions.

If there are significant challenges in the diocese, it may be helpful to have the consultant interview several people who could give a clear picture of the challenges. This, of course, would include people with differing views of the challenges. This would then give the consultant more information with which to help formulate the questions.

Questions are sent to participants electronically with a cover letter and instructions from the consultant.

Participants respond to the questions

All participants, including the Bishop, are asked to carefully consider each question and give as honest and informed an answer as possible. It's key to stress the importance of clear, non-judgmental answers even if there are difficult challenges to be addressed.

It may be appropriate for participants to consult other members of the ministry they are representing, especially if that input would bring clarity and balance to the answers.

Participants are asked to send their responses to the consultant in an electronic format. A deadline should be set at least two weeks before the EMMR meeting.

The consultant collates the responses by question by participant. These results are then sent to each participant before the meeting. These will also be a part of the consultant's report.

A meeting of participants is held to discuss the questions

Generally, a meeting is held for all participants, including the Bishop, to review the questions and answers and then to glean common themes and possible directions for the future. The meeting is usually scheduled from 9:00 am to 3:00 or 4:00 pm. A possible agenda is below. (Note, that, if there are significant challenges in the diocese, it may be necessary to have a different format for the meeting. The consultant would work with the Bishop and Standing Committee to design the meeting.)

Each participant gives a concise summary of their written answers and any additional information they want to share regarding the question. After each question common themes are identified. This is captured on newsprint. After all questions have been reviewed then time can be allocated to reflect on what areas would be beneficial to address over the next period in the diocese.

Since there is a lot of material to cover in the EMMR meeting, it may be beneficial for the participants to gather again in the near future, after the consultant's report is issued. This time would be used to reflect on what next steps in the diocese could be taken to address necessary changes to or enhancements of ministries in the diocese.

Each participant is asked to complete an evaluation of the EMMR and send it electronically to the consultant. These will help in the future design of an EMMR.

A report for the EMMR is produced by the consultant

After the EMMR meeting, the consultant will use all the material from the meeting to compile a complete report. This report will contain an executive summary, the questions used, written answers to the questions, newsprint comments and evaluations.

It is recommended that participants receive a copy of the full report. The Bishop and Standing Committee will decide what to communicate to the diocese. Generally, it's the Executive Summary.

Sample agenda

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April 10, 2019

Participants:

Facilitator:

Time: 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM

Dress: Casual

Agenda:

9:00 Prayers, introductions, coming together and set stage

9:15 Share answers to questions, reflect on answers as a group and consider common themes

10:30 – 10:45 Break

12:15 Prayers and lunch

1:00 Continue morning sharing

2:00 How this information and common themes frame the future

2:30 Final thoughts and comments

2:50 Closing prayers

3:00 Adjourn