



THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF IOWA

225 37th Street, Des Moines, IA 50312
(515) 277-6170
iowaepiscopal.org

Regional Missioners Job Description

I. Overview

The prophet Jeremiah told the people, “Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare” (29:7). The need and opportunity we seek to address with the Regional Mission Initiative is this: How can our faith communities, working alongside others, seek the welfare of the city and sustain a thriving and vibrant community in the midst of depopulation realities in rural Iowa?

[The Diocese of Iowa’s Regional Mission Initiative](#) (RMI) is an immersive program to support and strengthen our lay and clergy leadership in small churches to address the challenges facing our shrinking communities. We are seeking three priests to serve as area missioners and work intensively with cohorts of up to nine congregations each in three geographic areas of our state, over a period of three and a half years. The missioners would live in the region they serve.

The missioners will gather with up to three lay people from each of the small churches they work with in their region in a cohort of mutual learning and support. Missioners will facilitate the cohort’s engagement with rich theological formation and spiritual practices, alongside community organizing methods, and asset-based community development. They will draw on data-driven research and learning modules developed at Iowa State University as part of the [Rural Shrink Smart Initiative](#) funded by the National Science Foundation and other tools to build new partnerships to strengthen the networks of relationships, interactions, and resources within the community.

II. Duties and Responsibilities

The three missioners will work directly with a network of existing lay leaders and retired and/or part-time clergy leaders in those regional areas to:

- Find ways to invest in the health and welfare of their towns to sustain vibrant community in the midst of depopulation realities
- Provide coaching in relational work to develop life-giving partnerships within their local communities
- Work with and nurture a variety of expressions of church in local contexts where there is no current Episcopal presence within an hour’s drive
- Encourage and support creative public projects to be more visible as a progressive, inclusive faith tradition
- Support ongoing leadership formation in each congregation, including robust Christian formation for all ages, lay ministry training, and vocational discernment (including ordination)
- Discern and develop sustainable leadership options to best serve each congregation’s vision and mission
- Gather and share information and resources across the regions and our diocese

Throughout the three and a half years of the project, each missioner will spend much of their working time each week in each community in a rotation, supplementing the supply or part-time



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clergy that the community may already have and officiating worship, preaching, offering formation, lay ministry training, and vocational discernment opportunities in person and on Zoom.

III. Gifts and Skills We Seek

We are seeking 3 priests who are ministry developers, with a genuine heart for equipping and empowering lay leaders. We are looking for creative and adventurous community organizers who embrace a theology of abundance. We need experienced facilitators, comfortable leading discussions in person and on Zoom. Experience working with small churches and small towns is important. Experience with coaching, congregational redevelopment, Asset-Based Community Development, and the College for Congregational Development would all be useful. A demonstrated history of working both independently and collaboratively is paramount.

The Episcopal Diocese of Iowa values diversity of culture and thought and seeks talented, qualified employees regardless of race, gender, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, age, gender identity and expression, or any other protected classification under Federal, State or Municipal law as well as the Canons of the Episcopal Church and resolutions of the Episcopal Church General Convention.

IV. What we can offer you

- The opportunity to work with committed followers of Jesus across the state who will partner with you to seek the good of their neighbors and their town
- The chance to work in new ways towards ensuring the quality of life in small towns
- Co-workers on the diocesan staff that function as a collaborative ministry development team
- The technology and support needed to work remotely
- Financial assistance with moving expenses
- A base salary of \$70,000, with cell phone, 100% full family insurance, mileage, pension, and a low-moderate cost of living
- Continuing Education and coaching training
- 4 weeks (5 Sundays) paid vacation

V. To apply

Send your OTM portfolio or ELCA equivalent, a resume, and a cover letter to the Rev. Cn. Meg Wagner at mwagner@iowaepiscopal.org. Applications will be accepted until April 21, 2024.



Office for
Transition
Ministry

Ministry Portfolio

Full Portfolio (last updated Feb 21, 2024)

Episcopal Diocese of Iowa, Iowa

225 37th Street, Des Moines, IA 50312, United States

Contact:

Missioner | Receiving Names until 04/21/24.

mwagner@iowaepiscopal.org

Weekly Average Sunday Attendance (ASA)	Number of Weekend Worship Services	Number of Weekday Worship Services	Number of Other per Month Worship Services
Current Annual Compensation	Cash Stipend	Housing / Rectory Detail	Utilities
SECA reimbursement	Compensation Available for New Position \$70000	Housing Available for	Pension Plan We're in compliance with CPF requirements.
Healthcare Options Full family	Dental Yes	Housing Equity Allowance in budget	Annual Equity Amount
Vacation Weeks One month, including 5 Sundays (standard)	Vacation Weeks Details	Continuing Education Weeks 2 (standard)	Continuing Education Weeks Details
Continuing Education Funding in budget \$501-\$1000/year	Sabbatical Provision No	Travel/Auto Account Yes	Other Professional Account

Episcopal Diocese of Iowa, Iowa

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Describe a moment in your worshipping community's recent ministry which you recognize as one of success and fulfillment.

The Diocese of Iowa's Regional Mission Initiative (RMI) is a new and immersive program to support and strengthen our lay and clergy leadership in small churches to address the challenges facing our shrinking, rural communities. Thanks to an incredibly generous grant from the Lilly Foundation's Thriving Congregations Initiative, the Episcopal Diocese of Iowa will officially launch its Regional Mission Initiative in 2024. We are seeking three priests to serve as area missionaries and work intensively with cohorts of up to nine congregations each in three geographic areas of our state, over a period of three and a half years. The missionaries would live in the region they serve.

How are you preparing yourselves for the Church of the future?

We know that one of the trends emerging in the church is the reality that we will have more small congregations, primarily led by lay leaders and supported by members of the clergy. We believe that the diverse ecology of church configurations of the future Church will thrive through its deep roots in spiritual practices and its ability to reach out in love to its neighbors. We see the RMI as part of the bridge to this future. We are drawing on both ancient wisdom and practices as well as liberating structures of community organizing movements, alongside data-driven research from Iowa State University's, Rural Shrink Smart project. ISU researchers have found that, "Some communities continue to thrive as they lose population because they adapt and stay focused on quality of life, community services, and investing in the future of the town. Rural smart shrinkage is achieved through this dedication towards adaptation to population loss and devotion to mitigating the negative effects of population loss."

Please provide words describing the gifts and skills essential to the future leaders of your worshipping community.

hopeful, relational, innovative, collaborative

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Describe your liturgical style and practice for all types of worship services provided by your community.

The 9 churches the missioner would be working with are small churches in mostly rural or micropolitan communities (one urban cluster of at least 10k and less than 50k). Throughout the three and a half years of the project, each missioner will spend much of their time present in the communities, as needed, supplementing the supply or part-time clergy that the community may already have and officiating worship, preaching, offering formation, lay ministry training, and vocational discernment opportunities in person and on Zoom. Worship will include a variety of styles and practices depending on the local contexts.

How do you practice incorporating others in ministry?

Shared ministry is at the heart of this project. In addition to the existing clergy in the area, the missioners will gather up to three lay people from each of the small churches they work with in their region in a cohort of mutual learning and support. Missioners will facilitate the cohort's engagement with rich theological formation and spiritual practices, alongside community organizing methods, and asset-based community development. They will draw on data-driven research and learning modules developed at Iowa State University as part of the Rural Shrink Smart Initiative funded by the National Science Foundation and other tools to build new partnerships to strengthen the networks of relationships, interactions, and resources within the community.

As a worshipping community, how do you care for your spiritual, emotional and physical well-being?

You would be joining a diocesan staff that functions as a collaborative ministry development team. We pray together often through Zoom, gather in person at least once a quarter, celebrate each other's joys and share each other's burdens. In this position you would also work and pray with committed followers of Jesus across the state who will partner with you to seek the good of their neighbors and their town and who are invested in working in new ways towards ensuring the quality of life in their region.

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How do you engage in pastoral care for those beyond your worshipping community?

Our friends at Iowa State University have research that shows that socializing is an integral part of life in resilient towns and that "Most residents work outside town and many have lost their local school to consolidation, both of which limit opportunities for interaction and community cohesion. Resilient places promote socializing by hosting small-scale weekly events like farmers' markets and food festivals, concerts and music events, and adult recreation leagues." We believe that with some shifting of focus, our churches are uniquely able to offer their facilities for cultural and social events that can help create community connections and caring relationships that will strengthen their town's social networks and ability to thrive.

Describe your worshipping community's involvement in either the wider Church or geographical region.

Our small churches in the Diocese of Iowa and across Province 6 have given voice to several things that are important to pursue, including recognizing how situations are changing in shrinking communities as they lose many of the assets that had previously sustained the quality of life in their towns. Our Regional Missioners will each work with 9 congregations in a region to engage with businesses, non-profits, and city and county leaders to improve the quality of life in their communities.

Tell about a ministry that your worshipping community has initiated in the past five years. Who can be contacted about this?

This will be a new initiative in the Diocese of Iowa and we are committed to its vibrancy. It has grown out of many years of dreaming and trying new things together. By turning our focus toward maintaining or increasing the quality of life in towns across Iowa that are losing population, we are drawing on what the prophet Jeremiah told the people, "Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare" (29:7). As people of faith, we believe there is no area of life, no institution, no set of local circumstances, no set of economic, social, or racial demographics that does not affect us and that we cannot impact. Thus, the need and opportunity we seek to address with this initiative is this: How can our faith communities, working alongside others, seek the welfare of the city and sustain a thriving and vibrant community in the midst of depopulation realities in Iowa?

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What is your practice of stewardship and how does it shape the life of your worshipping community?

While this project is funded through a Lilly Grant and diocesan resources, we are acutely aware that congregational financial stewardship alone is not a realistic funding model for our rural churches or for our diocese into the future. As a diocese and within the churches that our missioner works with, we will be exploring how best to diversify our funding sources.

What is your worshipping community's experience of conflict? And how have you addressed it?

One of the many factors that ISU identified in smart shrinking towns is that, "residents in smart places tend to rate their towns as more trusting, supportive, and tolerant (versus mistrusting, indifferent, and prejudiced), indicating they are more likely to accept controversy and depersonalize politics on divisive issues." Unfortunately for many of our small towns, the other reality in Iowa is that politics has become so divisive that city council and school board meetings across the state regularly are tense and angry. As part of their mission to invest in the health and welfare of their towns, the cohorts will receive training and coaching on theological reflection in the public square, civil discourse, developing intercultural competency, and dismantling racism.

What is your experience leading/addressing change in the church? When has it gone well? When has it gone poorly? And what did you learn?

While Iowa is known for its agricultural prowess, that often carries with it a perception of settled earthiness, and not always exciting imagination. Nothing could be further from the reality of God's life here among us. The Diocese of Iowa has a long history of creativity and fertile imagination. Maybe it is the agricultural DNA - the knowledge of how and when to plant, cultivate, and grow - not only corn, but new ways of being the church. As a diocese, we experiment with new models of being church together and embrace a theology of ministry rooted in baptism. We have tried on new ways of forming clergy and ministry development teams and eliminated the distinctions between parish and mission - all of our churches are called congregations. The Episcopal Church in Iowa is a leader "in the field" where God has planted us and we would love to have you minister among us!



Ministry Portfolio

Full Portfolio
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Prior Incumbents

Name	Position Title	Date Begun	Date Ended

Name	Position Title	Date Begun	Date Ended

Name	Position Title	Date Begun	Date Ended

Church School	Number of Teachers/Leaders for Children School	Number of Students for Children School

Number of Teachers/Leaders for Teen/Young Adults School	Number of Students for Teen/Young Adults School	Number of Teachers/Leaders for Adults School	Number of Students for Adults School

Day School	Number of Students for Day School	Number of Teachers for Day School	Number of Total Staff for Day School



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Contact:
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Worshipping Community Web site: <https://www.iowaepiscopal.org/regional-mission-initiative>

Media Links:

Online References:

Languages Significantly Represented:

Spanish

Provide Worship or Classes in:

Also represented in 2 of our congregations: Dinka

References

Bishop: 515-277-6165, officeofthebishop@iowaepiscopal.org
The Rt. Rev. Betsey Monnot

Diocesan Transition Minister 515-850-5220, mwagner@iowaepiscopal.org
Rev. Cn. Meg Wagner

Current Warden/Board Chair

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