

**Short Paper #4**  
**How Did DESC Develop Structure Proposals**  
**to Present to Convention?**  
**by Nancy Mahoney Cohen, Chancellor**  
**September 15, 2006**



This is the fourth in a series of short informational papers which are being sent to all Convention delegates. Please keep alert for these e-mails, and be sure to read them in preparation for the work of casting your vote at Convention. The collection of Short Papers is also available on the DESC Workspace, [www.edecr.org/desc/](http://www.edecr.org/desc/).

**Now, let's explore: How did DESC develop structure proposals to present to Convention?**

**Summary:** DESC was charged by the Standing Committee “to provide two or three structure alternatives with associated organizational charts”. DESC began with two models: the first reflective of a ‘grassroots’ driven call to local ministry and mission; the second a ‘cleanup’ of the current organization, without major changes to decision making or money management. A third structure model was quickly added, which also focused on ‘cleanup’, but with a more traditional view of reporting lines of authority. The three structures were then presented and discussed with Convention delegates throughout the diocese in two rounds of tri-deanery meetings. As the third round of tri-deanery meetings began, DESC plenary meetings and a DESC meeting with the Joint Leaders’ Group resulted in a consolidation of the two ‘clean up’ proposals into one “Collaborative” model which combined features from both proposals. Thus, two structure models – the “Mission” and “Collaborative” models – will be presented to delegates at the October Convention.

**A detailed listing of the milestones within the eight months of work by DESC follows.**

*(Key: DESC=Diocesan Evaluation and Structure Committee; SLO=San Luis Obispo; SCMS=South Coast, Monterey, Salinas; SCV=Santa Clara Valley.)*

**January:** DESC organized and split into three working teams: Evaluation, Structure and Finance.

**February:** (1) Monthly meetings of the DESC plenary committee began. (2) The Structure Team also met monthly, with members of the Finance Team working with them through the first months. (3) DESC’s plenary meeting discussed reading materials, including the prior diocesan evaluation, and Harvard Business Review articles. (4) A Yahoo group site was established for members to exchange documents and ideas via email. (5) A first-draft list of canonical responsibilities and functions was sent to all DESC members, and a structure survey was emailed to diocesan chancellors across the country (*see chancellors’ responses at [www.edecr.org/desc/](http://www.edecr.org/desc/)*).

**March:** (1) The Structure Team divided into subgroups and developed two structure models: “Shared” and “Mission”. A list of diocesan responsibilities was annotated with any applicable national canons (*canons list at [www.edecr.org/desc/](http://www.edecr.org/desc/)*). The Structure and Finance Teams discussed structure philosophy and developed a points list (*points list at [www.edecr.org/desc/](http://www.edecr.org/desc/)*). The Structure Team also looked at current problems, e.g., people not sure of their responsibilities; communication between bodies not always good. (2) DESC’s plenary meeting discussed both models and gave pros and cons for each. The plenary meeting also received and discussed the Evaluation Team’s update. (3) Chancellors’ responses to the structure survey were tabulated. Some findings from the Chancellors’ survey: other dioceses have a great variety of structures; some dioceses combine

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council and corporation, others council and standing committee; variety of voting methods; success often tied to bishop; voluntary giving not usually successful.

**April:** (1) A third structure model developed, at first titled “Customary.” (2) All three models were discussed at DESC’s plenary meeting, along with the evaluation update. The Evaluation Team had looked at failing parishes throughout the diocese; it became clear that diocese needs a recovery plan. (3) Council’s Budget Advisory Committee and DESC worked together and discussed possible budget cuts, such as to staff, DIEM, giving to national church. (4) DESC met with Alan Blanchard, former Chair of Church Pension Group. Blanchard’s comments: attracting a good bishop is the most important task, followed by recruiting a good leadership team; the bishop’s tasks were identified (the bishop has the central role in the diocese); ECR needs to simplify its structure and lines of authority, and identify reporting responsibilities; identify and empower leadership, sharing in the ministry (one body with Christ as the head); learn how to do evangelism through hearing and telling stories; have integrity in all actions. (5) DESC met with Bishop William Swing of the Diocese of California. Swing’s comments: be flexible; bishops coming into dioceses with fixed ideology are not usually successful. (6) The first round of Tri-deanery meetings (SCV, SCMS and SLO) was held – giving delegates a first look at structure models and opportunity for feedback on funding and structure models.

**May:** (1) Written outlines for each structure, using the same template for ease in comparison, were developed and discussed. (2) Nancy Cohen met with diocesan chancellors in Phoenix, who discussed what works or doesn’t work in their diocesan structures. (3) DESC met with Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori of the Diocese of Nevada. Jefferts Schori’s comments: structure alone won’t solve a diocese’s problems; flexibility gives leeway to new bishop; foster healthier habits of being and relating (collaborative ministry). (4) The second round of Tri-deanery meetings began.

**June:** (1) DESC plenary meeting discussed emerging structure and funding models. (2) Two more tri-deanery sessions were held, and DESC members also attended a West Valley deanery meeting to answer delegates’ questions. (3) Co-chair Ken Wratten met with the Standing Committee, bringing the first report of DESC. (4) Joint Leaders Group met with DESC.

**July:** (1) DESC met with Bishop Romero. Romero’s comments: people participating in shared ministry create trust. Diocesan finances are now well managed; previous lack of attention may have brought about the 10+ plan. This diocese must help ethnic clergy become proficient in English. (2) After lengthy discussion, DESC decided to consolidate the “Customary” and “Shared” structures into one “Collaborative” model. (3) Comments on funding were received, and “friendly” amendments were anticipated from delegates.

**August:** (1) The third round of Tri-deanery meetings was held. (2) DESC’s written progress report was given to the Standing Committee. (3) The Joint Leadership Group reviewed DESC documents.

**September:** (1) All material for Convention packets was to be delivered to the diocesan office by September 8. (2) The last DESC plenary meeting will be held September 19.

**October:** Delegates will meet at the Diocesan Convention. (1) **October 20:** DESC will give a pre-Convention presentation at Embassy Suites in San Luis Obispo. (2) **October 21:** delegates will cast deciding votes at Convention.