

## **Considerations regarding Frequency and Format of Provincial Council Meetings**

2005 06 09

Out of forty-six comments on the evaluation of the Provincial Council meeting of 2004, in Gander, three raised concerns about the cost of the current format and frequency of meetings, and three suggested shortening the meetings to one or two days.

Two comments suggested that we review the purpose of the Synod and Council with respect to our Constitution.

Two comments suggested having an increased focus on education.

Three comments expressed appreciation for the agenda and pattern of the Gander meeting. Three expressed appreciation for the trip to Twillingate. One mentioned fellowship, while another mentioned the relaxed style of meeting.

In reviewing the question of the length of meetings, there are three issues in play. The first issue evident from some of the comments is the perception that shorter meetings would produce cost reductions. The second issue is one of whether the time is being used sufficiently productively. The third is the desirability of maintaining the relaxed and congenial pace of our meetings.

Shorter meetings with the same amount of business would produce a format that is much more exclusively business oriented. This would appeal particularly to people who are goal-oriented. The current style of meetings, with time for fellowship and a tour of some sort is attractive to people who are relationship-oriented, but frustrating to the goal-oriented sort. It is not evident from the comment on the need to review our purpose to what extent this reflects concern for cost, but it does appear to be a factor.

Thus three questions arise:

- 1) What is the proper balance between work and fellowship, goal and relationship orientation?
- 2) What is the purpose of Provincial Synod/Council and is it being fulfilled?
- 3) How much money would be saved from holding shorter meetings, e.g., two days?

Following from question 2 is the question of whether the purpose of Council might be fulfilled with a less frequent schedule of meetings. Obviously this would imply meeting twice per triennium rather than the current annual frequency, possibly meaning a spring meeting 18 months after the Synod meeting (the first meeting of Council being immediately at the close of Synod). Such a meeting might be longer than the current three days, given that dropping one meeting would generate substantial savings in travel costs. Two considerations in exploring this option are how this would affect the ability of Council to fulfil its purpose and how it would affect the group dynamics.

Following from question 3 is the question of the extent to which the life of Council should be dictated by cost concerns. We all know that the Church is facing financial problems, and stewardship is an important concern. From the perspective of the Provincial Synod, stewardship means that we have a responsibility to use our time and money wisely. Thus it is a fair question whether the traditional afternoon tour and fellowship time are appropriate uses both of time and money, for cutting this element of our agenda is the most obvious way of paring meetings down to two days. Does it serve a need related to group dynamics? Is this a real need, or a justification for having a good time together?

According to the Constitution, the purpose of the Provincial Synod is:

- A. The providing of occasions for fellowship and of a forum for the consideration of topics of particular concern within the Province, including:
  - (i) faith, witness, ministry and liturgical worship;
  - (ii) the political, economic, educational and social dimensions of the Ecclesiastical Province; both those common to the whole and those of a more local nature;
  - (iii) the relationship of the Church to governments in all matters affecting the quality of life and of community within the Ecclesiastical Province.

In order better to fulfil the above functions, Provincial Synod shall call upon speakers and scholars to inform them in seminar and worship on these matters.

- B. The planning and promotion of teamwork among bishops, clergy and laity within the Province.
- C. The exercise of canonical and legislative authority and jurisdiction in all matters affecting the general interests and well-being of the Church within the Province in the following matters:
  - (i) the election of the Metropolitan and the definition of the duties, responsibilities and authority of the Metropolitan;
  - (ii) the constitution and organization of the Synod, including the regulation of the time and place of its meetings, the order and conduct of its proceedings, and the appointment, functions and duties of its officers, Provincial Council and committees for the proper conduct of its affairs;
  - (iii) matters referred to it by the General Synod, the diocesan synods in the

province and the House of Bishops of the province;

- (iv) the ordering and directing of matters liturgical, and in particular, the authorization of special forms of prayers, services and ceremonies for which no provision has been made under the authority of the General Synod or the House of Bishops of the Anglican Church of Canada;
- (v) with the consent of the General Synod and of any diocese affected, the adjustment of the boundaries of the province;
- (vi) with the consent of the General Synod and of the dioceses affected, the division of the province into dioceses, the establishment of missionary dioceses within the province, the division of existing dioceses and the adjustment or rearrangement of diocesan boundaries;
- (vii) the Constitution of the Provincial Court of Appeal, with original and appellate jurisdiction, including the procedure therein and enforcement of its decrees and judgments;
- (viii) the ecclesiastical discipline and trial of bishops;
- (ix) the regulation of the ministrations of the clergy and others; including the oaths and subscriptions of clergy;
- (x) the administration of any fund or trust established in respect of the province or the Synod;
- (xi) the confirmation of the election, consecration, and resignation of bishops;
- (xii) the relations of the church to the civil authorities and to public education within the Province;
- (xiii) the formation and constitution of provincial branches of organizations and societies established by the General Synod for the promotion of the work of General Synod;
- (xiv) the consideration, promotion and advancement of any object or matter for the general advantage of the Church in Canada or in the province, referred to the Synod by the General Synod.

D. The supervision of the programme of the Advisory Council for Postulants for

## Ordination within the province.

Our current format of meetings allows for two days of travel, each with a small amount of business, and two days of sessions, divided such that the first day includes a half day of business and some form of group activity for the afternoon and evening, whilst the second day is taken up with business for the full day and into the evening. The afternoon and evening group activity provide for fellowship and group-building and thus have an impact on developing the group dynamics for the intensive business day which follows.

An analysis of the agenda for the 2004 Council meeting indicates that there were 13:10 hours of sessions and approximately 8:00 hours spent in the trip to Twillingate. Session time may be summarized as follows:

<i>Item</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Purpose (see above)</i>
Worship	4:25	34%	A
Bible Study	1:20	10%	A
General Synod matters	2:25	18%	C(ii)
Diocesan reports	1:00	8%	B, C(ii)
Governance of the Synod*	1:30	11%	C(i), C(ii), C(x)
Provincial business	2:30	19%	B, C(ii), D
Total	13:10	100%	

\*Governance of the Synod includes such items as the metropolitanical election, procedural matters for the meeting, finances, housekeeping and so on.

Many items in the constitutional statement of purpose are either reactive in nature (e.g., responding to matters referred by either General Synod or a Diocesan Synod) or have to do with maintaining infrastructure that is used only very occasionally. The latter includes matters related to the Provincial Court, and its use as a court of first instance in the ecclesiastical trial of bishops and a court of appeal for trials at the diocesan level. The Provincial Court has met twice in the history of the Province of Canada. For obvious reasons, it is to be hoped that this frequency of meeting will be either maintained or reduced. Some other areas of the purpose of the Synod have not seen much activity in recent times, including matters relating to relations with civil authorities and public education in the Province.

The questions which need to be discussed are: what matters of business does the Council see arising in the near future? What items might Council members wish to see included on the agenda? Do the several dioceses have in mind matters that they might wish to refer to the Provincial Synod? How do the frequency and format of the meetings facilitate the business of the Province? Would reduced frequency or a shorter format enhance or impair the work of the Provincial Synod and Council?

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