

## DESCRIPTION OF THE DIOCESE

Geographically, our diocese is one of the smallest dioceses in Canada with an area of only 8,250 square miles. The Diocese was established by Royal Letters Patent in July 1850. Our Synod was organized in June 1859 under the leadership of our first bishop, Francis Fulford. We have an Anglican membership of about 13,000 people to be found in 115 congregations organized in some 70 parishes with about 85 clergy serving in parochial and other specialized ministries. In addition, many retired clergy are still active in ministry. The Diocese is divided in six archdeaconries and eight deaneries.

### Diocesan Staff

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### GOOD NEWS STORIES • HIGHLIGHTS • INITIATIVES

Our diocesan office is busy revving back up after the relative quiet of the summer, especially with the Bishop being away for most of it! Through my charge to Diocesan Synod last year, I thought it would be the opportune time for an episcopal ministry review. I asked our newly-formed Human Resources committee and the new Director of Human Resources, Archdeacon Janet Griffith Johnson to initiate a process for an objective review of my ministry as bishop, evaluating the areas that need to be addressed.

Along side the review of my own ministry, we have undertaken a review of how we, in the diocesan office, work together and the scale of our responsibilities towards each other and the diocese.

Plans are under way for the celebration of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first Diocesan Synod in 2010.

This summer's Lambeth Conference was very interesting and informative. The Diocese of Montreal had a larger than usual representation; apart from the Bishop of Montreal, the diocese was represented by Nicholas Pang who worked as a steward and by Canons Joyce Sanchez and Lettie James who worked with the International Anglican Women's Network.

We had some staffing changes in our office. We welcomed the Venerable Janet Griffith Johnson from the Diocese of Huron, as Executive Archdeacon and Director of Human Resources of the Anglican Diocese of Montreal, effective October 1st. We were also pleased to announce the appointment of Mr Harvey Shepherd as editor of The Montreal Anglican, succeeding the Reverend Canon Joan Shanks, who held the post for the last 18 years. We also had to say goodbye to our long-time Assistant Archivist Sophie Lemercier who left us to follow her husband as he took on a new job on Quebec's lower North Shore. Her position has been filled by Ms Barbara McPherson, formerly Secretary to the Executive Archdeacon; Ms Kimberly Northcott is now holding that position as well as being Human Resources Coordinator. It has been a difficult and challenging triennium for the Synod Staff. There have been numerous transitions and changes, but through it all, they have pulled together, helping out by taking on added responsibilities. I am very grateful for the excellent way in which we are working together.

## **CHALLENGES • ISSUES**

The 148<sup>th</sup> Session of the Synod of the Diocese of Montreal was held in late October. At that synod, the Anglican clergy and laity of the Diocese of Montreal voted in favour of a motion requesting “that the Bishop grant permission for clergy, whose conscience permits, to bless duly solemnized and registered civil marriages, including marriages between same-sex couples, where at least one party is baptized; and that the Bishop authorize an appropriate rite and make regulations for its use in supportive parishes.” The vote taken on the first night of business was passed in the order of clergy (44 - 25) and in the order of laity (59 – 32). In my statement to the Diocese, I said “The Synod – our diocesan legislative body – has now requested that I grant permission for clergy, whose conscience permits, to bless duly solemnized and registered civil marriages, including marriages between same-sex couples, where at least one party is baptized; and that I authorize an appropriate rite and make regulations for its use in supportive parishes. I will need some time to reflect on today’s discussions, to consult further with the other Bishops of the Anglican Church of Canada when we meet later in October, and to consider the concerns of our partners in the wider Anglican Communion. All who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. As in any family, we have disagreements – sometimes serious. And as a family, it is important for us to be together; to continue to meet together to discern the mind of Christ. I was elected as Bishop of all Anglicans in this diocese, and as such, I call upon all to remain at the table, working to sustain the highest level of Communion possible. Until a decision is made, there is no change in our current policy and practice; I expect our clergy to refrain from blessing same-sex couples.” I, and several of our members of synod, commented that we were encouraged by the debate on this motion and quality of the interventions. Of course, this is not a “done deal” as other motions modifying or curtailing are on the agenda for this year’s synod.

Last February, on the feast of Hannah Grier Coome, the Founder of SSJD, we celebrated the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Sisterhood’s ministry of prayer and presence in the Diocese of Montreal. The Sisterhood is grateful for the graciousness of the Diocese throughout these years and for the fruitfulness of our relationship. Even so, after discussion with the Diocese of Montreal and long deliberation in Community, we had to jointly come to the conclusion that the Sisters would withdraw from the House in Montreal at the end of June. The issues leading to this decision are complex; however, both the Diocese and the Sisters would like to see us better able to minister in the diocese without being housed in a large but underused facility. Over the course of the years, the Government of Quebec added school taxes which had to be paid on the property in addition to the lease adding a further financial burden to the Diocese of Montreal already struggling to continue to minister faithfully to its people.

Together, the Diocese and Sisterhood are exploring new ways of the Sisters being available for ministry in the Diocese of Montreal. When invited to come, the Sisters would like to let others in the Diocese know of our availability over a 1 or 2 week period and cluster several events together, staying with Associates and other friends. By not having Sisters stationed at a house, other Sisters would be available to visit and minister and would allow the Sisterhood to train more Sisters in missions and retreats. By seeing this as an opportunity to rethink their mission and ministry in the Diocese, the Sisters are opening themselves to the leading of the Holy Spirit and to go where they are called.

Remember the Sisterhood’s history in the Diocese of Montreal. The Sisters did one sort of mission work in the parish of St John the Evangelist from 1929 until 1963, when the Sisters withdrew. They came back in 1998 to another kind of ministry of prayer and presence, at the invitation of the diocese.

Subsequent to the Diocese's Resources for Ministry Committee's (R4M) request to the Bookroom Board of Management regarding examining the current and future viability of the Bookroom and the motion from the Board of Management to close as of October 31, 2008, R4M has accepted the recommendations of the Board and that acceptance was reported to the Diocesan Council in June. On Friday, October 31, 2008, the Diocesan Bookroom will close its doors for the last time. This ministry of the Synod of the diocese of Montreal has existed since the 1920s. Competition from discounting chain bookstores, Internet purchasing and the continual diminishing numbers of Anglicans in Montreal made it too costly to continue.