

## DESCRIPTION OF THE DIOCESE

Geographically, our diocese is one of the smallest dioceses in Canada – the smallest in this Ecclesiastical Province – 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 five archdeaconries and eight deaneries.

### Diocesan Staff

The Right Revd Barry B. Clarke	Bishop (11 <sup>th</sup> )	bclarke@montreal.anglican.ca
The Ven. Janet Griffith Johnson	Executive Archdeacon	jgriffith@montreal.anglican.ca
Me David M. Eramian	Chancellor	deramian@lavery.qc.ca
Mr Norman G. Spencer	Treasurer	treasurer@montreal.anglican.ca
Mr Stephen Tam	Manager, Financial Services	stam@montreal.anglican.ca
Mr Marcel de Hêtre	Episcopal Secretary	bishops.office@montreal.anglican.ca
Ms Kimberley Northcott	Human Resources Coordinator	knorthcott@montreal.anglican.ca
Mr Harvey Shepherd	Editor, Diocesan Newspaper	editor@montreal.anglican.ca
Mrs Nicki Hronjak	Program Administrator	nhronjak@montreal.anglican.ca
Mrs Adrienne Clements	Fundraising Coordinator	aclements@montreal.anglican.ca

## GOOD NEWS STORIES • HIGHLIGHTS • INITIATIVES

Last November, I hosted the first **Bishop's Fundraising Dinner**; our guest speaker was Archbishop Fred Hiltz, the Anglican Primate of Canada. An audience of close to 125 gathered at the University Club of Montreal and paid \$200 each to partake in culinary delights such as Atlantic Salmon Mousse, Beef Consommé, Herbed Rack of Lamb, and Dutch Chocolate Mousse, and to hear the primate's remarks on the Five Marks of Mission of the Worldwide Anglican Communion. The event was such a resounding success that we will have a repeat of it this year.

In mid-September 2008 and again in early August this year, a delegation of clergy and lay people of the diocese went on a **two-week mission to our partner diocese of Masasi** in the Anglican Church of Tanzania. I was fortunate to be able to take part in the second of our two missions. We attended the opening of the new dispensary that is the first level of medical care in Tanzania. This project is supported by the PWRDF and CIDA. We had many opportunities to visit around the Diocese and the greetings and welcome were wonderful. It was tiring but each in his or her own way was challenged as we reflected upon our experience of living in a different culture and of being a Church in a different context. The spirituality of the people is rich despite the poverty and hardships faced by so many. I give thanks to God for this opportunity to broaden my experience of the world and of God's mission being expressed in an environment of many challenges and opportunities to live the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

As part of our ongoing Strategic Plan, I struck a diocesan Task Force to review our diocesan structure and our Diocesan Staff structure. This group began their work in August 2008 and reported to our Diocesan Council last June. Our Vision 2010 statement states that we need to have "a physical, administrative and financial structure that reflects diocesan and parochial needs and mission." **The Bishop's Task Force on the Structure of Synod Office and Committees** was given the challenge to:

- a) examine Diocesan administrative and committee structure and their responsibilities,
- b) assess whether they meet the Diocese's needs and reflect its mission for the foreseeable future,
- c) respond to a perception that Diocesan administrative operations need review and improvement,
- d) gather all relevant information and
- e) propose adjustments to put these operations more in line with the needs and agreed mission of the Diocese.

They began their task with a review of what functions are performed, how they are carried out and, through a survey, how this work is perceived by the staff, committee members and other interested members of the Diocese. There were a total of 147 responses and the vast majority said they were satisfied with the services and support from the Synod Office staff and that they had enjoyed their experience as members of committees and subcommittees. The two areas cited as needing improvement were the timeliness of communication about important Diocesan news and the need for a more "user-friendly" and more frequently updated website. Other proposals referred to Diocesan Council the need to restructure some of its own committees as well as the way and to whom they report. One of the main and most pressing need noted was for improved communication within the Diocese.

As far as Synod Office is concerned, the task force noted that it is composed of dedicated and capable persons whose jobs are to support the mission of Synod. The activities of the office should be clearly coordinated with the Synod committee and the parochial structures to support them in the fulfilling of their mandates. To implement this new committee structure, changes to the Diocesan Canons and Constitution will need to be made and approved at Synod and Diocesan Council would then approve the new or amended mandates.

Just over a year ago, two of the "livelier" honorary Cathedral canons took a trip to England. It was a new partnership, although it grew out of the diocesan responsibilities of both Canon Tim Smart, Director of Lay Education and Incumbent of Grace Church in Sutton, and Canon Nick Brotherwood, Bishop's Missioner to young adults and founding pastor of eMerge, a community of 18-35 year olds in downtown Montreal, went to England to explore some efforts by two Church of England dioceses and the British Methodist Church to find new ways to reach out to people who have little interest in the church. As a result of that visit the two canons have begun to add some fresh expressions to the vocabulary of the church in Montreal. One of those fresh expressions is – **Fresh Expressions**. That's the name of the British programme that Canons Brotherwood and Smart looked into in Britain and of a package of materials that the two canons brought home and have been adapting for use in the Montreal Diocese and other parts of Canada.

The duo has already presented Fresh Expressions material to workshops in many parts of the diocese, which often included people from several denominations. Participants in these gatherings are generally churchgoers themselves but are looking for ways to reach out to others. They also packed their material in the form of six weekly sessions of group activity, film and music clips, worship and prayer at the Montreal Diocesan Theological College in the fall of 2008 under the designation "Mission Shaped Intro." "Our world and our lives have changed radically in the last twenty years, but has the church adapted to this change?" participants were asked. "Do we need a changing church for a changing world? Are new forms of church really possible? If so, how can they be developed?"

In this diocese, **Fresh Start** is a relatively new endeavour. In 2007, three people from our Diocese went to the Mount Carmel Spiritual Centre in Niagara Falls to be trained as Fresh Start facilitators. Fresh Start is a diocesan-led program that seeks to foster healthy relationships among clergy, their congregations and their dioceses during critical periods of transition in clergy leadership. While ministry in a healthy context can be rewarding for lay leaders and clergy alike, it can also take its toll on wellness. The program's goal is to build a culture in which the mutual ministry of the clergy and congregation starts off on the right foot, enabling their new relationship to begin with a "Fresh Start". Some of the topics that are covered are: conflict management, role definition, challenges of exits and entrances, leadership styles and creative parish council or vestry retreats.

Through the Fresh Start process, clergy and laity alike develop a common language to speak together about: the challenges that they face in ministry, particularly in the first two years together. In the diocese of Montreal, in two groups of congregational Fresh Start, approximately 50 lay people from 12 congregations in our diocese made a commitment to gathering for 7 Saturdays. Fifteen Clergy currently in transition attend Fresh Start on a monthly basis.

2009 marks the **150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the First Synod of the Diocese of Montreal**. Although the Diocese of Montreal was founded in 1850, it wasn't until June 1859 that the Diocese held its own synod. The diocese came together for a special eucharistic celebration with more than 700 people filling Christ Church Cathedral to near-capacity on Trinity Sunday, June 7<sup>th</sup>. The service, which included a stirring sermon by the Right Revd Mark MacDonald, National Indigenous Bishop, also saw the commissioning of our delegation that visited the companion Diocese of Masasi in Tanzania during the month of August. The service began at 1 pm, but Anglicans from across the diocese began arriving at 11 am to take advantage of the inflatable games provided for the children and to enjoy the free hamburgers, vegi-burgers and hotdogs cooked by three of the diocesan archdeacons. Music for the service was a mix of the modern and traditional with a massed choir (of about 100 voices) made up of volunteers from church choirs from around the diocese under the direction of Patrick Wedd, organist and choirmaster at the Cathedral. In his sermon, Bishop MacDonald mixed humour and native spirituality with a message on the importance of mission for the church of today and tomorrow. He charged the congregation with "getting the message" proclaimed by Jesus. He noted that Jesus' followers, who he referred to as the "duh-siples" didn't understand his message, while that message was crystal-clear to those who were touched by his ministry, such as blind Bartimæus, the Samaritan woman, the widow of Nain, the poor and the marginalized. He urged the diocese to hold before it the environmental challenges facing Canada and this province and the needs of the native population that are, on the surface, largely invisible to Montrealers. He said these challenges need to be incorporated into "the power, mystery and mission of God."

One of the highlights of the service was the screening of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary video in which well-known clergy and laity of the diocese portrayed such characters as Queen Victoria and Bishop Francis Fulford, first bishop of Montreal. The light-hearted tone of the video had the congregation roaring with laughter and drew a standing ovation at its close. The script was written by Ann Cumyn, an active lay woman of the diocese, and produced by Matthew Eramian, 21-year-old son of Diocesan Chancellor David Eramian. Our sincerest thanks to Father Mark Rogers who spearheaded the committee and its members Ann Cumyn, Rae Phillips, Charles Goddard, the Revd Jessica Bickford, Daphne Morris and Marsha Hunter.

## CHALLENGES • ISSUES

After almost 80 years of service, a long-standing Anglican Ministry in Montreal came to an end on October 31, 2008, as the **Diocesan Bookroom** closed its doors for the last time. Competition from discounting chain bookstores, online sales and the continual diminishing numbers of Anglicans in Montreal made it too costly to continue. The store manager, Fr. Gregory Nimijean, and the Board of Management made this decision after efforts to make the store better known to church goers did not yield any slowing of the annual decline in sales, nor the increasing losses. The final financial crisis was far from the first for the book room, which evolved from a rather stodgy outlet for church materials sometimes criticized for a lack of attention to merchandising techniques in its early years to a bright and stimulating store stocked with a broad selection of books reflecting Christian and other religious traditions. It had become valued and respected by a range of readers extending far beyond the Anglican Church. But not quite enough of them, it seems. Since 1987, the Book Room had had rent-free quarters in the Promenades Cathédrale under provisions of the agreement with the Oxford Group, owners of the mall and office tower on church-owned land under and behind Christ Church Cathedral. The decision to close came after years of attempts by the store to broaden its financial base and reduce annual deficits in the \$50,000 range, partly by following the lead of other bookstores – but with a Christian twist – and diversifying its product lines into art objects, religious articles, fair-trade coffee and other fair-trade products. The store and diocese also sought, with disappointing results, to rally "ecumenical" support from other Christian churches. I presided at a "celebration of ministry" on October 1<sup>st</sup> to give thanks to the current staff and the current board of management for their ministry.

The issue of the **blessing of same-sex unions** continues to monopolize much of our time and energy. The diocesan synod held in 2007 adopted 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." During the twelve months between diocesan synods, I reflected on how I should respond to this expressed will

of Synod. I have prayed for God's guidance, sought the counsel of fellow Bishops, and listened carefully to all who have spoken from various perspectives; discussion with clergy and laity around the diocese and House of Bishops. In forming my response to this motion, I have been strengthened in my conviction that God remains faithful in guiding the Church to the truth, that our chief call on this matter is a pastoral one, and that we are challenged to proclaim a prophetic voice to the Church and the world.

I am mindful that we do not normally act in isolation. The question of blessing same-sex civil marriages is before our sister and brother Christians in many dioceses across Canada and the Anglican Communion. At this juncture I believe some are being called to speak with a prophetic voice, challenging long-held assumptions, unseat prejudices, and advocating on behalf of those whose circumstances do not permit them to advocate for themselves. Others are being called to speak with a voice of caution calling the Church to evaluate and test all positions with the long-standing, three-fold reliance on tradition, reason, and scripture. For reasons, perhaps known only to God, I believe we, in the Diocese of Montreal, are among those who have been called by God, to speak with a prophetic voice. In time our voice will either be affirmed by the body, or stand corrected. To that effect, I established a commission with the responsibility of drafting for me an appropriate rite for this blessing and guidelines for implementation. In this process, I have been committed to an open dialogue, and have provided opportunities on a formal basis for listening, dialogue and further discernment. Notwithstanding, we are also working alongside the Faith, Worship and Ministry committee of our Anglican Church of Canada, charged by General Synod to develop a process to engage dioceses and parishes in study of the Christian perspective on human sexuality in light of scripture, reason, tradition and current scientific understanding. I recognised that, as far as the motion which was passed, this does constitute an incremental step forward, which is consistent with the wishes of Synod, all the while observing the cautious posture voiced and upheld in other parts of the Anglican Communion.

The same-sex issue has also led to the **splitting of two of our congregations**; not long after our diocesan synod in October, corporation members of the parish of St Augustine informed me of their resignation, effective December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2008, along with the parish secretary. As well, the term of employment of the Deacon-in-Charge of the parish ended on December 31 (the deacon-in-charge subsequently was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Don Harvey of the Anglican Network in Canada (ANiC) and now ministers at St Timothy's Anglican Bible Church, the first ANiC parish in Quebec). As a result of the resignation of the Corporation and of a great number of parish members leaving to join the ANiC parish, in accordance with our diocesan canons, I placed the Parish into Trusteeship. With the help of the trustees, who gave a lot of management support, those who continued faithfully to attend St Augustine's set about getting back on their feet and considering what to do next. Whilst experiencing a renewed sense of joy in the Gospel, and love in worship and community, a series of informal parish meetings were held over the next few months, and gradually a consensus emerged. A little over a month after we held a service to celebrate 50 years of worship, service, and community in their building, I took part in a service to mark the closing of parish worship and the move of the congregation to a new home at the Church of the Resurrection in Valois.

On June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2009, the priest-in-charge and the people's warden of the parish of St Stephen's, Westmount resigned (the priest-in-charge also relinquished his priestly orders to join ANiC). Some 80% of the parish members also left but the situation at this parish is not as dire as it was at St Augustine. The remaining members elected a new people's warden, and this new corporation, with the help of several clergy members, is busy finding out what their future holds. With careful stewardship of their resources, both financial and people, they are seemingly righting their ship after surviving the storm.

As the result of the financial situation facing our Diocese, the decision was made for the non-renewal of our **Youth Coordinator's**, Deacon Jessica Bickford, contract. We thank Jessica for all of her hard work with the youth of our diocese and her efforts to make the church a safer and more secure place for people of all ages. I am planning to meet with the young people of our Diocese to assure them that this decision does not reflect any decrease in our commitment to them. I will be working with Father Christopher Belle, our youth chaplain, and Archdeacon Edward Simonton, our former youth chaplain, to get their input as well as putting together a task force, in which youth will play a leadership role to determine how we can best meet their spiritual needs at both the parish and diocesan level.

### **OPPORTUNITIES/SUGGESTIONS FOR SHARING WITH OTHER DIOCESES (POSSIBLE RESOURCES, POLICY DEVELOPMENT, ETC.):**

More and more, opportunities have arisen for **coordination and cooperation with other dioceses**, mostly with our immediate neighbours, Quebec and Ottawa. Meetings at various levels have been held to begin a resources-sharing process. A motion passed by the Synod of the Diocese of Quebec requests “the Bishop to enter into formal discussions with the Bishop of Montreal aimed at finding possible areas of mutual ministry, administration and programming leading to increased effectiveness in any areas or projects that can be shared, as well as pursuing potential cost savings for both dioceses.” The merger of the two dioceses is not being contemplated for the time being but the parishes in the Eastern Townships, a region straddling the boundary between the dioceses, could be one area of such cooperation. The two dioceses have cooperated in various ways for some time, some of them through the Montreal Diocesan Theological College. Canon John Simons, principal of the college, noted at its convocation last May, for example, that under the terms of an agreement with the Diocese of Quebec, college faculty provide instruction for locally-called priests, for deacons and for lay readers of the Diocese of Quebec. Also, Quebec and Montreal have joined forces with their Employee Assistance Program provider as the greater number of employees means a reduced rate for services – it’s cheaper for both dioceses to be regrouped than for each to subscribe to the service.

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### **SOME WAYS YOUR DIOCESE CAN CONTRIBUTE TO THE PROVINCIAL STRUCTURE AND HOW THE ECCLESIASTICAL PROVINCE CAN SUPPORT YOUR DIOCESE.**

- What about a provincial blog where we can ask each other questions, share new resources, advice, and updates?
- What about sharing of resources regarding congregational development, stewardship, youth ministry?