

**ECCLESIASTICAL PROVINCE OF CANADA
PROVINCIAL COUNCIL MEETING
September 23-26, 2010
Cavendish, Prince Edward Island**

DAILY DIGEST FOR THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 23

Provincial Council began with a celebration of choral evensong, hosted by St. Peter's Cathedral in Charlottetown. In place of a homily, the metropolitan, the Most Rev'd Claude Miller delivered the presidential address. The full text follows.

Quoting from the gospels of Luke and Matthew:

Go on your way. See, I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves. Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and greet no one on the road. As you go, proclaim the good news, 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. You received without payment; give without payment. Take no gold, or silver, or copper in your belts, no bag for your journey, or two tunics, or sandals, or a staff; He said to them, "When I sent you out without a purse, bag, or sandals, did you lack anything?" They said, "No, not a thing." "Go on your way. See, I am sending you out..."

In the gospel passages the words following the commissioning of the twelve disciples and a little later of the seventy begin the apostolic action of the Church of God. "Go"... "Go on your way. See, I am sending you out."

And quoting from Matthew 28:

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." Matthew 28

I remember with a tinge of nostalgia the family home of my youth. Sharon and I now have possession of this dear old place on the North shore of New Brunswick. This old house is different now. It's been changed in a few areas to enhance the accommodation. The so called improvement is the addition of kitchen cabinets and closets. When the two of us are there, even after such improvement, we still grumble a little about the lack of storage place.

A place where six once lived for many years, without kitchen cabinets or closet space, now, requires more storage space for two seniors. After having said this, I suspect that we are not unique. If we were, Martha Stewart and the contemporary world of consumerism and the acquisition of stuff would impair greatly or even destroy our economic system.

If we stop buying, economists say the whole thing comes crashing down. Economic stimulus and economic health depend on consumption of goods and services. The management of stuff is now a world wide industry. Yet, the majority of the world's population goes without life sustaining necessities. God has a mission.

The theme for our Council meeting is "Marked by Mission" and we are delighted that Dr. Ellie Johnson is here to facilitate a mission focused conversation that might enable and encourage us to be the mission minded church that we read about in the Book of Acts and the Gospels.

Even as we gather, as God's church, representing the Anglican expression of the Christian faith in the eastern most parts of Canada, we are met with challenges that have burdened us down. As an ecclesial body, a body commissioned by Jesus and empowered by the Holy Spirit, we trudge along with the heavy load of our traditional expectations of a Church governance model that was designed and functioned for another time in our history.

Our journey and mission is impaired by a heavy accumulation of stuff that at best serves to frustrate our efforts to share in God's mission.

On a personal note, the operative question for me as Priest, as Bishop and as Metropolitan, have I, and am I, responding to Jesus words "Go on your way. See, I am sending you out..."

The Apostolic Mission of God is a spiritual journey outward. The Apostolic Mission of the Church at every level ought to reflect the loving actions of God in world. The Archbishop of Canterbury in a radio interview in 2005 put it this way "[As Church], find out what God is doing and join in."

These will be old words to some: The Archbishop continues, "I've talked quite a bit about the church of the future as a mixed economy, meaning by that there's no one kind of church life that captures everything, that does every kind of job. We need both a traditional parish doing its work really well and some new kinds of venture, some new kinds of initiative; that's what I mean by a mixed economy, and I think that's where the health of the church of the future is going to lie.

We do need to recover confidence in the God of mission in the Church. We need to recover the sense that the agenda isn't something that we set or the world sets but that [which] God sets, that God has a vision for human beings which he wants us to pursue with Him, and that He will give us the resources that we need."

I trust that this is what our time together is about?

True, there must be a structure in place. It must be maintained. But again, the question is, "does our structure serve the mission, or is our mission mainly caring for the structure and protecting traditional expectations?"

A decade in the life of the Church is a very short time. Our General Synod adopted a way forward at the June Synod with the mission initiative “Vision 2019.”

In this vision, the Anglican Communion’s Five Marks of Mission has set the primary framework for ministry development over the next ten years. In so doing, we might more effectively engage God’s mission as discerned by the wider church and adapted to the local context:

- To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
- To teach, baptize and nurture new believers
- To respond to human need by loving service
- To seek to transform unjust structures of society
- To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth

We can all name good things that are going on at every level of church life. But, I want to suggest that for many of the faithful it is like trying to work while carrying a heavy load. To adequately address this vision we must be free to offer all our time talent and material resources to God’s agenda as the Archbishop stated “the agenda isn't something that we set or the world sets but that [which] God sets.”

The time is here to adopt new ways and means to travel lighter, so that we might engage a new and ever changing world. With the present resource base as a Province, as Dioceses and Parishes we cannot possibly engage the present culture so as to further God’s agenda of divine love.

At the time of our baptism and ordination, the witnessing community called upon the Holy Spirit to equip us with spiritual gifts for the up-building of God’s Church. As Bishop, as I reflect, on the Episcopal model of leadership I find that I am more like Martha Stuart, managing the accumulated stuff of the Church; than an Apostle who is sent into the world to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Vestries, Synods, Councils, and Church Committees are mandated with numerous tasks, the most having to do with managing the accumulated stuff of our traditional understanding of what is required to do Church.

At the risk of over simplification we might ask ourselves “What are the essentials for the church to effectively engage in God’s mission to the world?” How might we realign and consolidate resources to make our journey lighter?

There is movement across our Church to engage these very important questions beginning with General Synod. Our General Synod is working diligently with many Dioceses to flesh out Vision 2019 at the local level. Most of our dioceses are at various points along this journey. We realize as we journey that we are in a place that is unfamiliar.

It has been said that God's church finds itself in the post modern era, other say we are in the post Christian era, while others believe we are in the pre-Christian era. An era that resembles to a large degree the challenges of the early first century church. The church of those first disciples.

Regardless where we find ourselves, as leaders, God is sending his church into a new and ever changing world. God is calling his church to be accountable to the Good News of the Gospel and to lead those for whom we are responsible.

St. Paul calls to account the leadership of the early church as he calls us to account. He writes in the 10th chapter of Romans: "how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? 15 And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" Sent to bring Good News!

Our accounting practices always seem to start and end with things financial. Everyone these days seeks a balanced budget. This usually calls for budget cuts and withdrawing support and services. We are all familiar with this practice. This is a good thing if it enables God's church in its apostolic mission.

Diocesan and Parish governance structures and charitable tax numbers ought not to be the reason we exist. Surely there is another way of governing and administering at the local level that might free up time, talent and resources, so that every member, regardless of where we reside, might engage in God's mission, even in the remotest of places.

As we gather we might ask ourselves, could Provincial Synod more effectively assist dioceses to realize their vision by operating in new and creative ways that demonstrate effective stewardship?

What sacred cows or ineffective structures might be sacrificed so that God's mission might be enhanced?

If the way we do church presently, is of the stuff for a bygone day, there exists the possibility of little benefit to the gospel in a new and ever-changing reality. How might we engage this new challenge?

Provincial and inter-diocesan communication was a high priority at our Provincial Synod. At the same time there are few resources available for this worthwhile endeavour.

The World Wide Web is one means of communication to disseminate information and to share program information between dioceses. One recent observation about our present endeavours calls my attention to the short profile of each diocese.

The Diocese of Fredericton profile is hopelessly out of date particularly in the area of statistics. Depending on whom you ask the number of Anglicans in New Brunswick range from 9,000 to 70,000.

We are reasonably confident on the number of parishes and the number of Clergy at any given time, but it is difficult to give accurate information to the inquirer if we ourselves don't know who we are statistically.

From a diocese perspective how does poor information figure into planning for the future? It seems that the folk who gather information from outside the Anglican family know more about us than we ourselves.

It is from outside that we hear of how benevolent we are, or the date and time of the last Anglican standing. It seems that across the Church we are constantly having to deal with stale demographic data. Does it have to be this way?

In my humble opinion, Vision 2019, the decade that lies ahead requires accurate resource information to initiate change that will enable the proclamation of the Good News of the Kingdom.

As we emerged from General Synod, there was a sense that a process of renewal was beginning, "a new day is dawning, but it isn't here yet."

Synod encouraged us to be vigilant in the meantime by encouraging and financially supporting six (6) areas of ministry and mission: Young people and their passion for justice as manifest in "justice camps"; Support for the Bishop Ordinary of the armed forces; support for the National Indigenous Bishop; ongoing healing and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples; support to Northern Dioceses; building bridges through enhanced communication.

So the question is, "how might we consolidate, align and resource God's mission in our province, our national church and beyond for this new day?" A great challenge and opportunity to enable teaching, baptizing, and the spiritual nurture of all believers; to respond effectively to human need and loving service; to transform unjust structures of society, and the safeguarding of the integrity of creation and renewing the life of the earth.

How might we effectively align our known resources with our vision? And in so doing, equip ourselves to realistically engage an ever changing cultural context that is at best indifferent to the Church of God. Is our vision realistic given our unknown spiritual condition as the body of Christ?

Diocesan Executive Officers are key people in all our Dioceses and they have been invited to our Provincial Council meeting to share ideas among themselves about inter-diocesan cooperation in key area of administration. They have been encouraged to

observe our proceedings and to add their wisdom to our debates and dialogue. We need to hear the voices of all who lead.

Sharon and I are of an age now where we know full well that we brought nothing into this world and we will carry nothing out. How might we dispose of our useless closet and cupboards contents? Our closets and cupboards are full too overflowing, lots of neat stuff.

A little research and information from the stuff management gurus however reveal a dark dirty secret, and the secret is “our kids don’t want our stuff.” How best then might our stuff be used to God’s glory?

As Church, we have a lot of stuff to manage but we know that our journey in God’s service is not over. God’s church has been blessed, our closets are full to overflowing, but are they full of the stuff that we need for the journey?

What is it that we take for the next leg? Jesus sends us out at every age. “Go on your way. See, I am sending you out.” As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”

AMEN.

Evensong was followed by a reception hosted by the Diocesan Church Society of Prince Edward Island. Provincial Council deliberations resume with the celebration of the eucharist on Friday, September 24, at 8:30 a.m.