

Summary of Diocesan Reports Provincial Synod 2021, “Rejoicing in Hope”

Describe in detail any initiative by churches and members of the diocese that is producing real hope for the time ahead, especially after Covid 19.

- **Innovative uses of technology for worship and outreach** is mentioned in all reports.
 - Technology has allowed dioceses to reach their current parishioners and connect with new ones. Central Newfoundland has seen attendance rise over the past year!
 - Technology has enabled different forms of outreach. For example, a member of Nova Scotia & PEI started a monthly Zoom group aimed at people who consider themselves spiritual, but not religious. It currently has 76 members.
 - Technology has also enabled church-based training programs and educational programs to continue.
- **Outreach to the local community** continues in conventional and unconventional ways.
 - Multiple dioceses have found new processes and partners to feed those without food security, including partnering with local restaurants (Eastern Newfoundland), starting a food bank on church property (New Brunswick), and innovating to hold a COVID-safe food drive (Montreal).
 - Dioceses have also established online groups and protocols to address the issue of sustainability.
 - Other forms of outreach include providing housing for the homeless, developing new websites, and establishing online groups, activities, and series.
- **Global outreach and connection** have been a source of hope.
 - In partnership with The Rotary Foundation, Fredericton is preparing to send a medical mobile unit to its companion diocese in Ghana.
 - Since 2018, 4 priests from Africa have been welcomed into incumbencies in Fredericton. Two now hold permanent residence.
 - Eastern Newfoundland continues to support refugees.
 - Nova Scotia & PEI have created a task force to address systemic racism.
- **Financial and resource-based initiatives** form another theme.
 - Both Central and Eastern Newfoundland have begun to scrutinize their finances and brainstorm cost-, ministry- and resource-sharing between parishes.
 - Other parishes are starting to rethink the use of their space, either questioning the need for a building altogether or rearranging it to better suit their community’s needs.
 - Central Newfoundland began a special “Jubilee Protocol” that focuses on questions of sustainability and mission in the local community.
- **New partnerships within and outside of the Anglican Church** are forming and strengthening.
 - The Diocese of Nova Scotia & PEI has partnered with the dioceses of Fredericton and Montreal to create zoom series and workshops.
 - The Montreal Diocesan Theological College and United Theological College have created an alliance
 - As mentioned above, dioceses have partnered with institutions like restaurants and The Rotary Club to serve the larger world.

Where did you experience “rejoicing in hope” at difficult times during this pandemic?

- **The financial support from parishioners and the federal government** was mentioned by many.
 - In Eastern Newfoundland, the diocese gave \$1,000 mission grants to help parishes create or refine an online presence.
- Numerous reports mentioned aspects of **technology**:
 - Technology allowed dioceses to maintain worship and ministry remotely.
 - Technology spawned new ministries, from online prayer groups to parish health teams.
 - Technology enabled a wide spectrum of people to share their gifts in establishing and maintaining an online presence.
 - Technology connected and engaged those who might not otherwise have participated in services and activities.
 - Technology enabled successful events, programs, training courses and services.
- The pandemic’s **impact on the church community** was positive in many ways.
 - Numerous reports praised the creativity, commitment, adaptability, and cooperation of congregations. Eastern Newfoundland’s report concluded, “Overall, creativity gave birth to new ways of doing ministry.”
 - Both the ability to meet in-person and the ability of people to work in alternative ways were commended as sources of hope—the pandemic has enhanced our sense of community in multiple settings.
- Several reports praised the hope, comradeship, and support provided by the **monthly meetings of the Provincial House of Bishops**. This was an important source of comfort and resilience made possible through technology.
- Both Fredericton and Quebec discussed how **the pandemic has shaped and affirmed the identity of the church**. The diocese of Quebec put it beautifully when they said: “One of the church’s roles in this crisis has perhaps simply been to be a steadfast and non-anxious presence in the midst of everything, always pointing to another part of Romans, which holds out the hope that ‘neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.’”

Despite our limited resources of time, energy and money, our relationships among dioceses of the Province continue to be important. Have you any thoughts about ways to gather and to support one another within our Province?

- Opinions on **the extent that technology should be used** post-COVID were mentioned in every report.
 - The majority of dioceses believed that technology will continue to be an important tool for inter-diocesan conversation and enable dioceses to meet and collaborate more often. The diocese of Fredericton suggested that dioceses can also help each other with technological innovation and engagement.
 - Many also suggested a hybrid model, in which meetings would either always occur online, or alternate with in-person meetings. Proponents argue this would be convenient and environmentally friendly—and could enable groups to meet more often.

- Western Newfoundland also suggests the dioceses can **work together more closely as many big-picture elements unite them**, such as geography and context.

Suggested Actions

- Create a task force to examine existing inter-diocesan meetings and determine if and how to split them between in-person and online formats.
- Create groups to share ideas and support for the churches' continued use of technology.
- Consider holding online inter-diocesan gatherings more often.

Conclusion

In 2020, the church was forced to build itself all over again—online, on the phone, outside and six feet apart. Amidst the grief and terror of the pandemic, the church has continued to do its work in increasingly creative ways.

Now that we look towards the end of the pandemic, we could easily lose this momentum. But we do not have to. As brutal as the pandemic was and is, COVID-19 has enabled our dioceses to interrogate their identity, to engage with each other and the outside world in remarkably successful ways, and to meet people in their anxiety about love, death, life, and hope—subjects that the church, at its best, can address extremely well.

The church now has an opportunity to continue to build these abilities. If the Anglican Church can identify, support, and share their new skills and successes with each other, the church could undergo a revitalization. We were not able to choose the kind of obstacles that led to this innovation, but we can choose to hold onto the good and keep going.