

**The Synod of the Ecclesiastical Province of Canada
“Rejoicing in Hope”.**

**June 18th and 19th, 2021
The Diocese of Central Newfoundland
Report to Synod**

The Diocese of Central Newfoundland, being part of the island portion of the geographical province of Newfoundland and Labrador, and the Ecclesiastical Province of Canada, has experienced particular nuances in relation to Covid 19. On one hand, we have access to the same information as the global community. From this communication, our people respond with empathy and outreach. The dynamics of the pandemic have affected us in relation to social and communal disorientation, financial impacts, isolation, church lockdowns and our emotional, faith oriented and social well-being. On the other hand, we have a sense of being protected from spread because of our rural and widespread population. Certain aspects of Covid transmission are highlighted; for example, our province has large number of transitional workers, who have had to make huge adjustments to schedules, family life and travel. These people often find themselves under scrutiny and in the public eye.

Statistically speaking, our report has to take into account the reality of Covid 19's influences on vestry and parish annual meetings. We have had to adjust sacramental ministries in significant ways due to a number of provincial lockdowns. Most scheduled marriages have been deferred or cancelled. Likewise, Confirmation services have either been cancelled, or depending on numbers, have been held in mid-week services which have been live streamed to the larger community. A large number of our parishes entered a time of learning in relation to technology, and then began to record and live stream regular Sunday and mid-week services. We have been rediscovering just how much our community of faith as a diocese and as parishes means to us. In that regard, Covid 19 has brought us together in ways we did not expect.

Optimistically, we would say that the number of people viewing and/or participating in worship in some way has increased dramatically.

Statistically speaking we project that our numbers have not decreased by a significant amount.

The Diocese is comprised of 28 Parishes and 93 congregations.

The following numbers reflect the influences covid has had on our liturgical life:

Baptisms	58
Marriages	20
Confirmation	53
Funerals	165

Prior to Covid 19, the Diocese of Central Newfoundland was in a process of prayerfully and collegially drawing leadership and laity together to discern what our future's shape might look like. One plan that would have been realized was what we were calling a time of Jubilee. We were going to allocate a portion of our investment income and savings so that our parishes would have a time when they would not have to submit any assessment to the diocese. The funds saved were to be used to develop missional approaches in each parish, and encourage conversations about both mission and sustainability. Our goal as a diocese is to ensure that both conversations are constantly intertwined.

At the onset of Covid 19, we implemented the Jubilee Protocol. While the dynamics were different, many of our parishes did what they could to engage changing times with faith and optimism.

The diocese of Central Newfoundland did not see a significant loss in weekly offerings to our congregations. As a result, we were not eligible for any Government supplements.

Having said that, we note that at all levels of our administration and programming, we have made adjustments in relation to funding and forecasting.

Covid 19 has caused us see how our previous visioning and intended approach to Sustainable and missional conversations was very timely. We are intentionally engaging the fallout from the pandemic with a view that God is in the midst of change to guide, equip and provide all we need. We are approaching the future with realism, but also with faith and joy. Some of our parishes have been very diligent about visioning, and have begun some exciting conversations about sharing administration, ministry and payroll costs.

For those interested, the foundational document "Policy on Sustainable and Intentionally Missional Ministry" is available on our diocesan website.

Discernment Processes

As we discuss our future, new and exciting conversations are opening up. We are aware that the time has come for innovative thinking in relation to ministry shapes and

practices, and so have begun to engage laity and clergy in relation to vocational discernment, and creating pathways for people to be raised up locally for ministries in their context. A number of our parishes now have people in formation for the diaconate and possibly vocations to the priesthood. A new online program "Vocational Exploration" is now being offered as a first step to help clergy and laity alike, self-examine, and also be part of a larger faith community discernment and affirmation.

The vocational exploration course had 47 people enrolled for the first run.

Covid 19 has helped us focus in many ways about who we are as a community of faith. We have concerns about the ways the pandemic will form and re-form the way people think about God, Faith and Community. Our hope is to be able to engage people where they are. As we study the changing religious landscape, we will come face to face with asking questions about the trajectory of Western Christianity, and include our own future in that tough discussion. We believe we will find each other there and that God is already waiting for our arrival. Our missional and sustainable theology must come from there, else it will fail to speak into the real world.

While we are thankful for the presence of technology in our midst, and use it effectively, we are becoming very aware that we must always strive to build real community in real places with real people. Even on a National and provincial level, my hope is, that when and wherever possible, when we can...we must come together.

John: Central Newfoundland